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Abstract

This dissertation explores the creation, distribution, and use of five personality tests found extensively in corporate America from the mid-1940s to the end of the 20th century. The management techniques in which these tests—the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, California Psychological Inventory, Thematic Apperception Test, Maslach Burnout Inventory, and Stanford Shyness Survey—were embedded helped create a corporate environment that seemed at once more considerate of individual differences in personality and behavior and yet somehow also more constraining in the ways people were encouraged to live and work both inside and outside the office. In light of this tension, the problem my dissertation seeks to answer is: how and why did many come to see self-discovery and self-actualization as best achieved through self-management, self-discipline, and, in many cases, the narrowing of the possibilities of the self? This dissertation argues that the use of personality tests and self-assessments—alongside the rise of both humanistic psychology and new forms of neoliberal capitalism—carried with it a very particular rhetoric of personal freedom and individual liberation, one that had in fact been carefully crafted by psychologists and corporate managers in order to predict and control the behavior of the groups under their care. On top of this, self-assessments anchored a sociotechnical system that looked as if it illuminated unique parts of the individual, but which was in fact made up of routinized techniques for creating more efficient, productive, and perhaps more importantly, more profitable workers. By following these five tests from conception to development to their eventual use in corporate management, the power and influence of overlapping networks of researchers, universities, funding sources, publishers, and companies are seen in greater relief, and the outsized influence of Silicon Valley on postwar social scientific knowledge and management practice is made evident.

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BUILDING THE HIVE: CORPORATE PERSONALITY TESTING, SELF-
DEVELOPMENT, AND HUMANISTIC MANAGEMENT IN POSTWAR
AMERICA, 1945-2000

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AMERICA, 1945-2000

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Matthew John Hoffarth

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I used to think unconditional love was a ridiculous idea. After completing a dissertation, I realize just how important it is. For their unconditional love and support, I would like to thank my mother, Sharyn Negus, and my father, Garry Hoffarth.

ABSTRACT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: From Obscurity to Ubiquity: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Personality Revolution in Human Resources Management, 1942-1995	21
I. Carl Jung and Psychoanalysis in Europe and the United States.....	25
II. Katharine Briggs, Isabel Briggs Myers, and the Importance of ‘Type’ in American Society	30
III. Corporate Personnel Management and the Development of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)	35
IV. The MBTI, IPAR, and the Growth of Personality Testing in Postwar America	40
V. IPAR, Creativity Studies, and the Educational Testing Service (ETS).....	45
VI. Setting the Stage: Popular Management Literature in the 1960s and 1970s	50
VII. Discrimination and Shifting Views of Personality in Corporations and Academia.....	53
VIII. Mary McCaulley, the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), and the Creation of a National Personality Standard	58
IX. Conclusion	63
Chapter 2: Self-Development and the Expansion of the California Mindset: The Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR), Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP), and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), 1949-2000	68
I. Personality Testing and the Culture of Personality in the First Half of the Twentieth Century	72
II. Harrison Gough and the Development of Psychology and Psychiatry during World War II.....	76
III. Funding and Support for Psychology and the Social Sciences in the Early Cold War	80
IV. The Development of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and the Birth of Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP)	85
V. The Career Assessment Center and the Proliferation of Personality Testing in Corporate America.....	90
VI. Abraham Maslow and Humanistic Management Theory in California and Beyond	96
VII. Personality Tests in Total Institutions in the Countercultural and Post-Countercultural 1970s	102
VIII. The Growth of the CPI and CPP in the 1980s and 1990s.....	106
IX. Conclusion	112
Chapter 3: Organized Projections and Managed Bodies: David C. McClelland, McBer & Company, and the Business of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), 1962-1985	116

I. Between Yale and Harvard: David C. McClelland, Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan, and the Development of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)	122
II. Harvard’s Department of Social Relations (DSR) and the Creation of the Human Resources Development Corporation (HRDC).....	126
III. The Need for Power, Charismatic Leadership, and ‘The Curacao Intervention’	131
IV. Power and Self-Reflexivity in the Social Sciences and Corporate Management	139
V. Conclusion	150
Chapter 4: The Making of Burnout: The Stanford Prison Experiment, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and the Shift from Social Change to Self-Awareness in the Postwar United States, 1967-1991 .	154
I. From California to New York and Back Again: Herbert Freudenberger, the Free Clinic Movement, and the Origins of Burnout.....	158
II. The Impact of the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) on Burnout Research: Christina Maslach, Philip Zimbardo, and the Nexus of Social and Personality Psychology between Berkeley and Stanford.....	167
III. Putting Critique to Work: Sociological Theory and the Rise of Humanistic Management and Popular Management Literature	174
IV. Burnout Goes Mainstream: The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Management of the Individual in a Postindustrial Service Society	182
V. Conclusion	191
Chapter 5: A Self-Imposed Prison of the Mind: Philip Zimbardo and the Development of Shyness Research, 1971-2000	194
I. Shyness Research Before the 1970s	199
II. The Psychology of Philip Zimbardo: Attitude Change, Cognitive Control, and Neoliberal Governance	203
III. The Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) and the Creation of the Stanford Shyness Survey (SSS).....	207
IV. The Problem of Shyness in the Public Sphere.....	213
V. The ‘Californian Ideology,’ the ‘California Cult of the Self,’ and the Promotion of the Flexible Individual in Shyness Research and Practice.....	218
VI. Social Learning Theory and the Question of Leadership in a Shy Society	225
VII. Conclusion	229
Conclusion	232
Postscript	243
Bibliography	248

Introduction

Speaking to a gathering of business executives and human resources managers in 1974, Donald MacKinnon, former head of Station S for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and co-founder of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR) at Berkeley, told the audience that, “Assessment is for most persons an experience that prepares them for and contributes to self-development.”¹ For MacKinnon, psychological assessment—and personality testing in particular—was the most effective tool corporations had to convince employees that individual growth (measured most often in psychological terms such as self-realization and self-actualization) was consistent with organizational growth (measured in more concrete figures of profit or productivity). Testing could lower the barrier of resistance an employee might have to accepting that the company had his or her best interests in mind; MacKinnon noted that during assessment, an employee “gains some insight into himself, recognizing perhaps for the first time that with respect to this or that quality of behavior he is better than most, or not so good, or just run of the mill,” and that “if he chooses to use [these insights] and build upon them, [they] can become the basis of further development of his potentials, maximizing his strengths and overcoming his weaknesses.”²

¹ Donald W. MacKinnon, “The Role of Assessment Centers in Training and Development” (lecture, American Society for Training and Development, Greensboro, NC, June 4, 1974), 12. Archives of the Institute of Personality and Social Research, University of California, Berkeley.

² Ibid.

The notion that psychological assessment could be the first step in a program to help individuals achieve self-development and self-improvement became a common refrain in American psychological discourse toward the end of World War II, concurrent with the expanding influence of humanistic psychology. That said, this idea built upon an earlier—and still present—interest in the dynamics of *adjustment* of the individual to his or her environment. Sustained by a so-called ‘functionalist’ theory of psychology that fused evolutionary theory to William James’s pragmatic philosophy, this homegrown American psychological tradition “emphasized the constant interaction and mutual adaptation of the mind and the environment.”³ Whereas James and a number of other prominent American psychologists at the turn of the century (such as G. Stanley Hall and James Mark Baldwin) paid some attention to the way human action and behavior impacted the environment, those psychologists who became involved in mental testing were much more likely to focus on individual adjustment to experimental situations which they believed could stand in for, in aggregate, American society in general.

Initiated by the 1890 publication of the results of the first American psychological testing program by James McKeen Cattell, the mental testing movement used statistical methods devised by British polymath Francis Galton in service of a functionalist psychology that looked to find the best fit between

³ Donald S. Napoli, *Architects of Adjustment: The History of the Psychological Profession in the United States* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1981), 13.

individuals and society.⁴ Galton had been interested in the creation of group norms by which individual differences in performance across a wide variety of constructed situations could be compared and evaluated. In the hands of American applied psychologists such as Cattell, Henry Goddard, and Robert Yerkes, these statistical tools led to the creation and revision of numerous intelligence and aptitude tests, among them the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales and the Army Alpha and Beta Tests. These tests, taken by millions of American soldiers and civilians during the 1910s and 1920s, were most often used in the identification and selection of soldiers for specific roles (e.g., officer training and the intelligence services for high achievers, regular training or discharge for those who performed poorly), and certain types of instruction for students ('gifted' classes for high scorers, 'remedial' classes for low scorers). Individual adjustment to the institutions and norms of American society was the explicit goal of many applied psychologists in the first three decades of the 20th century, one that was aided by the use of psychometric tests that many believed accurately and efficiently matched individuals to their proper niche and role within society.

Between 1920 and 1945, applied psychologists looked to achieve professional recognition by taking advantage of the perceived successes of assessment during World War I, claiming that their particular expertise lay in the

⁴ Michael M. Sokal, "Introduction: Psychological Testing and Historical Scholarship—Questions, Contrasts, and Context," in *Psychological Testing and American Society: 1890-1930*, ed. Michael M. Sokal (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), ch. 1.

administration of psychological tests.⁵ During the 1920s and 1930s, an increasing number of assessments were introduced that identified not just aptitudes, skills, or abilities, but also certain character and personality traits. Although the most prominent of these tests, such as the image-based Rorschach and Szondi tests, had their origins in European psychiatric practice, they found a broad American audience—including applied psychologists, journalists, and the reading public—as European psychoanalysts moved to the United States and labored to expand their use beyond the hospital setting.⁶ In addition, during the 1930s, the first batch of non-projective personality tests created by American psychologists began to be introduced, among them the Thurstone Personality Schedule, the Bernreuter Personality Inventory, and the Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale. These tests quickly became associated with industrial psychologists who used them in the development of training programs for managers and salespeople as opposed to the intelligence or skills tests given to laborers and line workers.⁷ The increased use of character and personality tests with white-collar workers set the stage for the proliferation of such tests in organizations during and after World War II.

⁵ Napoli, *Architects of Adjustment*, 1, 9; James Reed, “Robert M. Yerkes and the Mental Testing Movement,” in *Psychological Testing and American Society: 1890-1930*, ed. Michael M. Sokal (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 84.

⁶ Morris Krugman, “Out of the Inkwell: The Rorschach Method,” in *Personality Assessment in America: A Retrospective on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Society for Personality Assessment*, ed. Edwin I. Megargee and Charles D. Spielberger (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992 [1938]), 18.

⁷ Kira Lussier, “Temperamental Workers: Psychology, Business, and the Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale in Interwar America,” *History of Psychology* 21, no. 2 (May 2018): 10-12.

This dissertation outlines the development of a new type of American applied psychology during the second half of the twentieth century by charting the histories of five commonly used postwar personality tests and assessments. Historians of psychology such as Kurt Danziger, Ellen Herman, and Donald Napoli have argued that the history of the three main subfields of applied psychology in the 20th century—educational, clinical, and industrial—can be broadly characterized as a history of attempts to achieve individual adjustment to society through the identification and harnessing of individual differences. While this depiction is largely correct, it fails to capture the complexity of postwar psychology, in particular the influence of humanistic psychology and the burgeoning interest in—and business of—personality testing. These two developments changed the flavor of American psychology in such a way that the term ‘adjustment’ does not adequately describe what clinicians and personnel officers were trying to achieve. Instead, the rise of the so-called ‘person-centered view’ of psychology after the war, coupled with the increasing interest in self-understanding and self-development in the early 1950s and then again in the 1970s, convinced psychological experts that their goal was not adjustment of the individual to society, but instead the ‘self-actualization’ of the individual and the facilitation of his or her growth along a path that, ideally, was decided on by that individual.⁸

⁸ For more on person-centered therapy, self-actualization, and the importance of humanistic psychology in American society, see Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954); Carl R. Rogers, “The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change,” *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 21, no. 2 (April 1957); and Jessica Grogan, *Encountering America: Humanistic Psychology, Sixties Culture, and the Shaping of the Modern Self* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012).

The irony is that these humanistic tendencies within postwar psychology did not always lead to greater self-fulfillment or growth, but very often to more subtle and covert forms of assimilation of the individual to American organizational society, a fact to which even the ‘architects of adjustment’—i.e., psychologists—were often blind.⁹ The majority of Americans who encountered personality testing in the second half of the 20th century did so in work situations, whether for the purposes of hiring, training, promotion, or during a job search. Whereas earlier tests (including personality tests) explicitly tried to match a person’s aptitudes, abilities, and traits to a position, the majority of postwar personality tests were deployed in such a way as to emphasize how a certain job or position could aid in the goal of self-development and personal growth. In other words, whereas there had once been an understanding that tests functioned to place the worker in a position where his or her skills would be most valuable to the corporation, the emphasis since the 1950s has been on the way in which a company or organization can help facilitate the primary goal of self-actualization for each of its members. The organization thus came to seem less like a business whose ultimate ends were profit and growth, but instead like a therapeutic provider of fulfillment and happiness to employees through the avenue of work.

However, when one looks at the relatively small cluster of potential abilities that personality tests and their concomitant techniques were supposed to help identify and develop—motivation, leadership, and communication, in particular—it becomes evident that these tests were not necessarily created for

⁹ Napoli, *Architects of Adjustment*, chs. 1 and 2.

the benefit of the individual, but instead for the effective administration and management of an increasingly complex, organizational society. Historian Roy Jacques has noted that motivation, for instance, must be understood as an industrial concept, since it is “Only where self-interest, coercion and rules are insufficient does ‘motivation’ as it is currently understood appear as a topic for organizing,” and that it “makes sense only where a group is divided into those who wish to direct the actions of others and those who, for whatever reason, are resistant to being directed.”¹⁰ Each of the five tests I analyze focuses on the identification of one or more of these three characteristics—motivation, leadership, and communication—in such a way as to make it clear that both their development and the fear of their decline or absence continuously occupied the thoughts of psychologists, managers, and human resources professionals who were tasked, first and foremost, with keeping a (post-) industrial economy and society running.

Fred Turner has argued that “The World War II effort to challenge totalitarian mass psychology gave rise to a new kind of mass psychology, a mass individualism grounded in the democratic rhetoric of choice and individuality.”¹¹ This psychology of mass individualism was initiated and sustained to a large degree by newly created postwar social scientific research institutes, such as the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at Berkeley, the Institute for Social Research at Michigan, and the National Training Laboratories in Bethel,

¹⁰ Roy S. Jacques, *Manufacturing the Employee: Management Knowledge from the 19th to 21st Centuries* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), 159-60.

¹¹ Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 6.

Maine. The founders and original members of these institutions, many of whom had worked for the U.S. military during World War II, created tests, assessments, and training regimens that attempted to create individuals who had the opposite of the ‘authoritarian personality:’ democratically-minded, gregarious and communicative, able to both give and receive feedback and criticism, those who could “act independently on the basis of reason.”¹² These types of endeavors represent what Turner has called the rise of the “managerial mode of control,” a type of social control in which “people might be free to choose their experiences, but only from a menu written by experts.”¹³ The fact that all of these social scientific research centers were funded by a mix of corporate foundation grants (e.g., from the Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford Foundations) and government monies (coming largely from the Office of Naval Research and, later, from the National Institutes of Health) serves to bolster the claim that governmental and industrial elites had a particular interest in creating individuals with personalities that made them motivated, communicative, and able to lead (or no less importantly, to follow).

Turner’s argument in large part echoes the point made by psychologist B.F. Skinner in his oft-neglected 1971 book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Skinner criticized attempts made by governmental, corporate, and academic elites to convey to the public that we are autonomous individuals with freedom to decide our own paths in life.¹⁴ Skinner believed there was an inherent “conflict

¹² Ibid, 45.

¹³ Ibid, 6.

¹⁴ B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 17.

between a rhetoric of participation, empowerment and development, and practices which systematically attempt to effect the control of the behavior of one group by another.”¹⁵ A radical behaviorist, Skinner believed all behavior was shaped by environment, and he recognized that certain people and groups had more power than others to shape the environments in which people interacted and became socialized. However, despite his approval of certain forms of ‘cultural engineering,’ he bristled at the notion that elites should hide their efforts at social control by masking them in a rhetoric of individual autonomy, development, and freedom. Instead, following up on the ideas expressed in his novel *Walden Two* (1948), Skinner envisioned more open discussion by all interested parties about how best to design our environments in order to build a modern behaviorist utopia.

Postwar personality testing, as well as the techniques and training regimens that were developed to follow up on their results, capitalized on behaviorist technology, insofar as these technologies were, in essence, expertly crafted apparatuses and scenarios that sought to effect a specific change of behavior in those who encountered them. However, in the 1950s, and then again in the 1970s, this overt style of behavioral engineering was disguised by couching the enterprise in terms of, first, a humanistic search for self-identity and self-realization, and later, a cognitive psychological rhetoric of self-directed growth and change. These two developments obscured the project of social and organizational control that assessment was designed to facilitate. Despite this

¹⁵ Jacques, *Manufacturing the Employee*, 119.

fact, it is true that this individualistic rhetoric had its own type of power: psychologists and managers had less explicit control over how individuals chose to interpret and act upon the results of these tests than they had prior to the 1950s, and very often it was a person's heartfelt identification with his or her results that produced a new type of individual whose future actions could not be entirely predicted or managed. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello note, for instance, that the integration of post-behaviorist technology and the cognitive sciences into management has "penetrated more deeply into people's inner selves...precisely because they are more human in a way," providing the basis for suggestions for how one *should* think and act, rather than directives on how one *must* live and work.¹⁶ This attempt to create a less authoritarian version of 'adjustment,' one that gave individuals a higher degree of flexibility while still producing a society under the sway of a managerial mode of control that "instrumentaliz[ed]...human beings in their most specifically human dimensions," is what I am calling postwar 'hive psychology.'¹⁷

Hive psychology is my term for the type of applied psychology that emerged in the 1950s that maintained the earlier goal of individual adjustment to modern industrial society, but did so through practices and techniques that focused on self-actualization and self-development. Emerging in the 1950s and becoming dominant by the late 1970s, hive psychology encouraged individuals to imagine themselves not as 'conforming' to social or organizational norms (in fact,

¹⁶ Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2005), 98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

it often explicitly denounced conformity, hierarchy, and bureaucracy) but instead as involved in the process of realizing their innate potential through achieving their own self-defined goals. I am calling this a ‘hive psychology’ because the metaphor of the beehive accurately captures the system of organization that psychologists, corporate executives, human resources managers, and many social scientific research institutes attempted to create. The goal, in large part, was to create a society in which one identified oneself with one’s work, and saw work as a means to self-discovery. Just as the queen bee, worker bee, and drone are all defined by their function within the hive, so postwar individuals under the sway of personality testing, managerial training, and worker development programs were asked to consider their work as a means of realizing their potential and performing their identity, and to see their success in this endeavor as crucial to the continued functioning of not just the organization but of society itself.¹⁸ As one historian of psychology has noted, “Disciplining is not opposed to autonomy and freedom. Rather, the notions of autonomy and freedom are embodied in, if not constituted by, those practices that are then used to regulate and socialize the individuals choosing to perform them.”¹⁹

This type of psychology went hand in hand with the rise of a new type of global socioeconomic arrangement, one that had been championed by a number of individuals since the late 1930s but which only became prevalent during the 1970s and 1980s. This so-called neoliberal ideology, as it is often termed,

¹⁸ Ibid, 63.

¹⁹ Sabine Maasen, “Governing by Will: The Shaping of the Will in Self-Help Manuals,” in *Psychology’s Territories: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives from Different Disciplines*, eds. Mitchell Ash and Thomas Sturm (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 114.

advocated for the dismantling of political and governmental regulations and the championing of the free market as the only legitimate way to coordinate human interactions; as Wendy Brown has written, “neoliberal rationality disseminates the *model of the market* to all domains and activities—even where money is not at issue—and configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as *homo oeconomicus*.”²⁰ The result is that individuals are tasked with the moral imperative of seeking their own self-interest to the exclusion of other potential wants and needs, and to do so solely through competition in the market rather than through collective action or democratic politics. Hive psychology and neoliberalism fit so well together because they were in many ways the obverse of each other: while one promoted self-actualization and self-realization, the other advocated self-investment and self-responsibility.

While these ideas may have remained somewhat distinct from each other in the first couple decades after World War II, by the 1970s they became conflated as the large corporations that exerted outsized influence over American society and the economy attempted to turn critiques of industrial society and capitalism toward their own ends.²¹ They did this in a number of ways: by adopting (and in many cases, creating) the images and mantras of the counterculture in order to market their products and services, and by transposing the model of the firm onto the individual in such a way that the imperatives of freedom, growth, and creativity were advanced for both corporations and the

²⁰ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2015), 31.

²¹ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 175-80.

individuals who worked for them.²² One other way they achieved this synchrony between self-actualization and self-investment was through personality testing, which encouraged individuals to develop their unique competitive advantages in the workplace, those that correlated to their specific personality types, traits, and abilities.

This situation is evident in the makeup and use of, for example, the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), one of the tests that this dissertation examines. Starting in the 1980s, when a person received his or her results on the CPI, he or she was assigned one of four personality types: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, or Delta. Alphas were said to be externally oriented and rule-abiding, assured and dominant in leadership style. Betas were reserved, introspective, and rule-abiding. Gammas were externally oriented and often challenged rules and procedures, whereas Deltas challenged mores and conventions but preferred a more reserved work style.²³ Harrison Gough, a faculty member at IPAR and the test's creator, said that, "Alphas will move toward top management, Betas toward middle management, Gammas toward staff as opposed to line positions, and Deltas toward consulting and advisory roles."²⁴ One's personality profile on the CPI was therefore supposed to determine one's place within the corporate hierarchy, to guide that person toward a position that was best suited to his or

²² Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (New York: Verso, 2015).

²³ Pierre Meyer and Sandra Davis, *The California Psychological Inventory: An Essential Tool for Individual, Group, and Organizational Development* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1992), 95-103.

²⁴ Harrison G. Gough, "Some Implications for Managerial Style of Interpersonal and Normative Orientations" (paper, American Psychological Association, New York, August 28, 1987), 5.

her strengths. Equally important was the fact that each test-taker was also given a score from 1 to 7 that quantified a person's 'realization' of his or her type: instead of trying to change one's type (i.e., his or her role within the firm), an individual was instructed to work on improving his or her level of self-fulfillment within his or her current position. Just as there is a hierarchy within the bee colony, with the queen on top, workers in the middle, and drones at the bottom, so Alphas, Betas, and Gammas all fill these roles in the corporate pyramid (with Deltas acting as the 'beekeepers,' performing the outside consulting role that has become so integral to achieving management goals since the dawn of the neoliberal era).

Gough believed that "A viable social organization needs all of these perspectives and kinds of people, in some proportionate mix that is functional in relation to the purposes and circumstances of that organization."²⁵ This rhetoric made the corporation seem like an equitable and diverse institution, when in fact decisions made about what a 'proportionate mix' of individuals was, and what the 'purposes and circumstances' of the company were, were very often in the hands of a small cadre of people in leadership positions. In other words, despite the seemingly democratic and participative corporate mix engendered by personality testing, it is clear that this rhetoric papered over the fact that the structure and function of the corporate hierarchy remained in place even as the environment was made to seem more participative, democratic, and inclusionary.

²⁵ Ibid.

In 1949, Donald MacKinnon wrote that the goal of the newly launched Institute of Personality Research and Assessment would be to “develop successful techniques to identify the personality characteristics which make for successful and happy adjustment to modern industrial society.”²⁶ The CPI, developed at IPAR and first published in 1956, was representative of that endeavor. Other tests that were developed, used, or revised at IPAR, such as the Myers-Briggs, the Thematic Apperception Test, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory—all of which are subjects of chapters in this dissertation—were either created or distributed with this goal in mind. However, as stated previously, adjustment took on a different character soon after MacKinnon made this statement, in large part because of the role IPAR and similar institutions played in introducing new forms of personality testing and manager training to the corporate world. Under their influence, adjustment would come to seem more open-ended, participative, and democratic, fitting for a society in which people were enjoined to develop themselves in whatever way they saw fit. However, the menu of paths for development and advancement that individuals had to choose from was in fact written by the creators and publishers of these tests, with corporate executives and human resources managers deciding how best to implement and use their results.

During much of IPAR’s history, the Institute focused on the abilities and traits of a small group of academic, cultural, and business elites in and around

²⁶ Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 46.

Northern California. The result was that the characteristics of this relatively homogeneous group of individuals came to seem like the ideal, while those who deviated from this were considered less desirable. For example, in their research from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, IPAR members focused on the personality types of so-called 'creative' individuals (e.g., architects, writers, and artists), and found that the vast majority received scores of Intuitive (N) and Thinking (T) on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.²⁷ When they found in the early 1960s that executives in the technology, electronics, and aerospace companies in the San Francisco Bay Area were also most often Ns and Ts, this established the idea within the Institute that creativity was the hallmark of success, and that those who did not have the 'Intuitive Thinker' personality type were less capable individuals. While there are numerous reasons to be skeptical this finding, one point should be made here: this result failed to account for the fact that most of the individuals tested had already been influenced to a large extent by humanistic psychology, and their answers perhaps reflected a contemporary interest in the rhetoric of self-development and self-actualization more than any underlying personality type or trait. The feedback loop between the cultural influences of the San Francisco Bay Area and the answers given by these individuals on the Myers-Briggs gave rise to a situation in which personality test results engendered by a very particular time and place reified an American ideal that has lasted well into the 21st century.

²⁷ Isabel Briggs Myers, *Gifts Differing* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1980), 157.

As historian Nadine Weidman has recently noted, Abraham Maslow, one of the founders of the humanistic psychology movement, “began to toy with the notion that self-actualizers were actually biologically and genetically superior to everyone else,” and that “Perhaps different social or governmental structures should apply to different classes of people (authoritarian for those at the lowest levels of the motivational hierarchy, freedom-maximizing for those at the highest).”²⁸ This idea, which Maslow began to express publicly after his forays into management consulting in the early 1960s, drew out some of the more unsavory conclusions from his hierarchy of needs and motivations that not everyone would scale. Although seldom expressed in these terms, the fact of the matter is that many of the training regimens used by human resources executives capitalized on individual differences on personality assessments to recommend certain persons for leadership roles—where they would be given a high degree of freedom—and others for middle management or staff positions—where they would be tasked with carrying out the demands of the executives. This, however, did not obviate the need for those at the lower levels of the corporate hierarchy from developing their own skills of ‘self-control’ or ‘self-management’ if they aspired—often in vain—to ascend the corporate ladder.²⁹

The dedication to self-management and self-leadership within hierarchically-managed organizations also speaks to the influence that positive

²⁸ Nadine Weidman, “Between the Counterculture and the Corporation: Abraham Maslow and Humanistic Psychology in the 1960s,” in *Groovy Science: Knowledge, Innovation, and American Counterculture*, ed. David Kaiser and W. Patrick McCray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 131.

²⁹ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 75-76.

psychology has had on the corporate world. Maslow's enterprise, which he in fact began to call 'positive psychology' in the 1960s, was taken in new directions by University of Pennsylvania psychiatrist Aaron Beck and psychologist Martin Seligman as they promoted a definition of psychological health as the "programmatically 'unlearning' of helplessness."³⁰ The influence of Maslow, Beck, and Seligman can be seen in the way management has become, in large part, a therapeutic discipline, where the manager's job is to "prop up the well-being of individuals, in order to keep their enthusiasm for service-based jobs as high as possible."³¹ The impact of positive psychology has been such that many people no longer see any incongruity between the rhetoric on self-management, self-actualization, and self-empowerment and those institutions in which an entire managerial class exists to keep up both motivation and morale, and which depend on employees ignoring the ways in which they are not actually masters of their own work.

The earliest studies that ignited the postwar positive psychology movement were carried out at IPAR in the 1950s, where psychologists, "in reviewing what during the war they had learned first-hand of heroic reactions to terrible stress decided it was high time that psychology should take a look at the positive side of human nature and concern itself with unusual vitality in human beings rather than disease."³² The psychologist who made this statement, Frank Barron, was on the forefront of psychedelic research with Timothy Leary at

³⁰ Davies, *Happiness Industry*, 165.

³¹ *Ibid*, 127.

³² Frank Barron, "IPAR in the Beginning," 3, n.d., Folder MAM: MBTI, Archives of the Institute of Personality and Social Research, University of California, Berkeley, Richmond, California.

Harvard, engaged from the start in the creativity studies at IPAR, and was a longtime teacher at Esalen, one of the nerve centers of the Human Potential Movement. Whereas a different set of people or a different culture might have seen this type of ‘vitality’ as itself pathological, characterizing a type of individual who was severely alienated from his or her environment and thus unable to respond appropriately to stress, fear, or danger, this person was instead held up as a model of psychological health, with psychologists at IPAR and elsewhere looking to create more of these types of individuals who could work harder and more efficiently, under conditions few other people could withstand. These techniques proliferated within California and spread to the rest of the nation on the back of psychological technologies that attempted to identify and measure personality types and traits, as well as therapies and training regimens that promised to develop people to their highest potential.

Personality tests do not just tell people who they are but help people define themselves and in so doing give them an identity and a path upon which they can start living a different, and hopefully more fulfilling, life. This path, while it has been put in place by others, does not appear authoritarian or coercive, in large part because it traffics in the rhetoric of health, happiness, and self-development, exactly the sorts of ideals that few Americans would choose to—or can afford to—forsake. The tests that this dissertation examines—the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Thematic Apperception Test, the California Psychological Inventory, the Stanford Shyness Survey, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory—helped individuals adjust themselves to a new type of reality, one defined by ever-

increasing organizational size and complexity and an emerging postindustrial economy in which leadership and communication skills became seen as indispensable. Whether or not the individuals who took these tests became leaders or fully self-realized was largely beside the point; what was important was that everyone came to see work as the primary avenue through which they could, in fact, work on themselves. That working on oneself often meant developing only a very limited set of skills—leadership, communication, and self-motivation—highlights the fact that there is an “entanglement of psychic maximization and profit maximization” at the heart of the neoliberal, postindustrial era, a phenomenon that personality tests and self-assessments have done much to usher in.³³

³³ Davies, *Happiness Industry*, 127.

Chapter 1:

From Obscurity to Ubiquity: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Personality Revolution in Human Resources Management, 1942-1995

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is, by far, the most widely used personality test in the world. Since the late 1960s, more than 50 million people have taken an official version of the test in one of two dozen languages, and each year, an additional two million fill out the MBTI in hopes of learning more about themselves and their personalities.³⁴ Scores of unofficial versions of the Myers-Briggs have also proliferated online, providing yet another avenue for people to find out whether they are introverted or extraverted, intuitive or sensing, thinking or feeling, judging or perceiving. On top of this, 89 of the businesses on the Fortune 100 list of largest companies in the U.S. use the MBTI for purposes such as hiring, personnel development, team building, reassignment, and promotion.³⁵ The Myers-Briggs clearly enjoys massive popularity both in the United States and throughout the world.

However, the exponential rise in acceptance of the Myers-Briggs since the mid-1970s could not have been predicted from either its sales numbers or its cultural cachet in the decades leading up to this. From 1942 to 1956, the first few editions of the test could only be obtained by writing directly to its creator, Isabel

³⁴ Murad Ahmed, "Is Myers-Briggs Up to the Job?," *Financial Times Magazine*, February 11, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/8790ef0a-d040-11e5-831d-09f7778e7377>.

³⁵ Ilana E. Strauss, "Soul Searching Through the Myers-Briggs Test," *The Atlantic*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/09/people-love-the-myers-briggs-personality-test/404737/>.

Briggs Myers; as a result, only a handful of psychologists and businesspeople in personal correspondence with her were able to get their hands on the instrument. Although Briggs Myers produced the first printed version of the test in the mid-1940s, it was not until 1956 that it found a distributor, the Educational Testing Service (ETS). However, during the time that ETS—better known as the developer of the SAT, or Scholastic Aptitude Test—published the MBTI, from 1956 to 1975, only a few thousand copies were sold each year, and often to the same psychologists and human resources directors already familiar with the test and friendly with its creator. After becoming one of its products, ETS did little to promote the Myers-Briggs, delaying the publication of its companion how-to manual until 1962. And even after the manual was published, ETS let the MBTI languish on the back pages of its catalogue and, in some years, failed to include the test in the catalogue at all. Indeed, long after the test had found success, one former ETS employee admitted to Isabel Briggs Myers that he had “protested vigorously against publishing the MBTI on the grounds that ETS did not publish personality tests, and that he was sure no one would ever buy it.”³⁶

Given this inauspicious start, what could explain the success that the Myers-Briggs enjoyed in the last three decades of the twentieth century? This development can be ascribed to a number of intertwined factors, among them an increased interest in self-understanding and self-development since the late 1960s, a burgeoning postindustrial corporate environment where knowing oneself and others and being able to communicate and forge relationships—so-

³⁶ Mary H. McCaulley, “Isabel Briggs Myers: Her Life,” *MBTI News* 2, no. 4 (July 1980): 3.

called ‘people work’—became paramount, and a glutted white-collar labor market in which human resources departments were apt to use any tool that promised to differentiate one employee from another for the purposes of hiring, firing, and promotion. In addition to these socioeconomic factors, however, it is also clear that the MBTI’s success has been due in large part to the ways in which it was marketed and sold from the mid-1970s on by both its new publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP), and the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), a public-private entity set up at the University of Florida for the purposes of popularizing the test and providing training and certification for those seeking to administer the test to jobseekers, employees, and clients.

Alongside CPP and CAPT, many corporate HR managers as well as a number of well-placed researchers, clinical psychologists, and authors created a network intent on promoting the Myers-Briggs as not only a reputable scientific instrument, but also an easy-to-use applied tool crucial to the success and wellbeing of both businesses and employees. The distributors and promoters of the test promised lasting harmony between individuals, their coworkers, and the corporate environment so long as everybody was willing to recognize and develop his or her personality type to its fullest potential. As numerous historians and sociologists of science have documented, the creation of more robust and diverse networks of ‘actors’ gives certain ideas more credibility and, in a certain sense, makes them more ‘factual’ or ‘real’.³⁷ In this case, a strategic turn towards

³⁷ Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 202; Donald MacKenzie, “Nuclear Missile Testing and the Social Construction of Accuracy,” in *The Science Studies Reader*, ed. Mario Biagioli (New York: Routledge, 1999 [1990]), 355.

corporate personality testing and human resources development in the 1970s—and the MBTI’s association, through Jung, with elements of the Human Potential Movement—gave the test and the concept of ‘personality type’ a currency it did not have in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, unlike what might have been the case two decades prior, the fact that the MBTI was distributed by a for-profit company gave it the stamp of legitimacy at a time when profitability and truth were becoming increasingly conflated.

In addition, the MBTI’s contested status as, on the one hand, pop-psychological humbug and, on the other, a useful human resources tool and research instrument, has only served to raise its profile, creating armies of supporters and naysayers both of which are interested in ‘exposing’ the test to as many people as possible. Those who deride the test, such as organizational psychologist Adam Grant, believe that the MBTI is similar to a horoscope or a palm reading: each of these things can lead to actual insights into oneself, but that does not mean they should be taken seriously as valid psychological tools.³⁸ Nevertheless, it would seem that those who have at least a favorable view of the test more than outweigh those who do not; as one literature professor has recently noted, “The massive popularity of the MBTI probably has a lot to do with the way it flatters those who take it. The test was designed to discover skills, not flaws...”³⁹ As a result, although most people who take the test do so in order to

³⁸ Adam Grant, “Goodbye to MBTI, the Fad That Won’t Die,” *Psychology Today Online*, September 18, 2013.

³⁹ Evan Kindley, *Questionnaire* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 44.

find the right job, many also believe they have discovered themselves in the process.

This chapter explores the creation, distribution, and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, interrogating how a relatively obscure test, created by a middle-aged housewife with the help of her mother—neither of whom had a degree in psychology—became the most popular personality test in use today. This is a story of how the Myers-Briggs was sold as a tool for both ‘people development’ and the ‘constructive use of individual differences,’ appealing to both a liberal interest in self-fashioning and individuality and to a corporate need to retain workers who were adaptable, cooperative, and effective. Appealing to hippies, yuppies, and many in between, the MBTI mediated between the wants and needs of a new generation and the perennial demands of business and industry; as such, its continued use says less about its scientific validity—which has been in question since its creation—than about its utility, about which there can be little doubt.

I. Carl Jung and Psychoanalysis in Europe and the United States

Although the actual development of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator did not start until the early 1940s, the story of its origins begins two decades earlier, with the publication of the book that provided the framework for the MBTI: Carl Jung’s *Psychological Types* (1921). In *Psychological Types*, Jung outlined the ways in which he believed humans experienced and made sense of the world. He divided individuals into two separate camps, the extraverted and the introverted, based on their so-called ‘attitude type.’ Jung proposed that extraverts focused

mainly on objects and people in the outside world, whereas introverts focused on the subjective, inner reality of ideas.⁴⁰ A person's attitude type, whether extraverted or introverted, was supposed to modify the four fundamental 'psychological functions' that humans use to navigate the conscious world: sensing and intuition (the two 'perceiving' functions), and thinking and feeling (the two 'judging' functions). Jung proposed that most people were dominant in one perceiving function and one judging function, depending on whether they used their five senses to gain knowledge (sensing) or preferred to analyze the present based on past experience (intuition), and then whether they applied that knowledge based on its harmony with the emotions (feeling) or with logical principles (thinking). Jung's schema resulted in a division of humanity into eight psychological types, each of which experienced and interpreted the world in a different way.

The Swiss psychologist's concern with how different individuals perceived and made sense of the world was fitting for the intellectual and social context of the late 19th and early 20th century German-speaking world. A revival of interest in Kantian philosophy, and particularly the question of whether humans had access to the world as it really is or whether they were relegated to perceiving only secondary phenomena, suffused the intellectual environment at the time. Well-known neo-Kantian philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Ernst Cassirer argued that consciousness, as well as the phenomena that appeared to consciousness, defined the limits of human knowledge. As such, securing the

⁴⁰ Carl Jung, *Psychological Types* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976 [1921]).

surest foundation for understanding the world would be achieved only through the systematic investigation of the ways individuals perceived the world and understood its contents. Jung's *Psychological Types* was his attempt to find a new angle from which to enter this debate: although much of his earlier work had been on the structures of unconscious thought and their clinical significance, this new 1921 work attempted to explain how different methods of conscious perception and judgment engendered interpersonal conflict and global strife and also sketched out potential remedies for this state of affairs. Started in 1917 and released only a few years after the end of World War I, *Psychological Types* reflected Jung's interest in creating a more positive and hopeful psychology than Freud, arguing that once everyone recognized and understood the eight different psychological types, much of the conflict that arose from interpersonal disagreement and misunderstanding could be avoided.

In addition to this, Jung was interested in understanding why Freud and one of his most prominent ex-disciples, Alfred Adler, had come to argue for very different psychoanalytic theories. Jung decided the fundamental difference was that Freudian theory was extraverted, whereas Adler's psychology was introverted, noting further that:

“Freud's is a psychology of instinct, Adler's an ego psychology. Instinct is an impersonal biological phenomenon. A psychology founded on instinct must by its very nature neglect the ego, since the ego owes its existence to...individual differentiation, whose isolated character removes it from the realm of biological phenomena. Although biological instinctive processes also contribute to the formation of the personality, individuality is nevertheless essentially different from collective instincts: indeed, it stands in the

most direct opposition to them, just as the individual as a personality is always distinct from the collective.”⁴¹

For Jung, Adler’s ego psychology was an inward-looking attempt to understand how and why individuals differentiate themselves from one another, whereas Freud’s insight was to note that all humans share basic instinctual and biological drives that reveal themselves in unconscious thought and action. Jung’s typology attempted to mediate between these two positions by showing that while humans differentiate themselves into eight distinct personality types, these types are delimited by the way human beings have evolved to perceive and make sense of the world around them.

Jung’s ideas seeped into American culture in the 1910s and 1920s, alongside much of the rest of psychoanalytic thought. A number of American literary figures considered Jung’s 1912 work *Psychology of the Unconscious* “the greatest contribution to the history of thought” in the first half of the twentieth century.⁴² If Freud and the more orthodox psychoanalysts initially appealed to psychologists, psychiatrists, cultural commentators, and social critics, Jung found his niche mainly among the creative set. Historian of psychoanalysis Nathan Hale writes that “Jung was more congenial [than Freud] because he was more flattering to a writer’s self-esteem...Jung considered the unconscious a positive creative force...Artists directly portrayed the powerful archetypes of the unconscious. In effect, Jung was more cheerful, seemingly more respectful of

⁴¹ Ibid, 60.

⁴² Nathan G. Hale, Jr., *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

impulse and emotion.”⁴³ One prominent American psychologist averred in 1920 that leadership of the psychoanalytic movement had passed from Freud to Jung and Adler, each of whom was more hopeful about successful clinical outcomes as well as humanity’s potential for self-preservation, renewal, and self-improvement. These positive interpretations of Jung’s thought were reinforced by the publication of *Psychological Types* the next year, a work that conveyed the possibility of intersubjective understanding and human cooperation.⁴⁴

As noted previously, the entire edifice of psychoanalysis enjoyed rapidly increasing popularity and recognition in America during the first few decades of the 20th century. This was due in no small part to what historian Eli Zaretsky has argued were the ways in which psychoanalysis bolstered Fordism and the new ideals of mass consumption. If “Psychoanalysis...supplied Fordism with an indispensable utopian dimension, facilitating a wave of rationalization that would have been much more difficult to achieve...without it,” it also encouraged the birth of a new type of mass consciousness, imbued with the notion that a crucial part of being an individual was, in fact, to purchase the latest goods, fashions, and trends that appealed to one’s ‘unique’ identity and desires.⁴⁵ In a parallel move, managers and business owners turned to psychoanalysis to find out “what the employee thinks...what are the worker’s satisfactions and aspirations;” such attempts to understand how better to motivate employees while on the job started the trend of caring about employees’ mental health and attending to their

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 79.

⁴⁵ Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 147.

psychological wellbeing.⁴⁶ Although Jungian analytical psychology did not initially lend itself to this type of deployment in the commercial realm—and certainly not in comparison to the version of Freud’s ideas championed by his American nephew Edward Bernays, the so-called ‘father of public relations’—the creation of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator would eventually allow Jung’s ideas to penetrate into many corners of big business. Jung’s ideas about personality type, individual development, and group understanding—reinterpreted and redeployed by Isabel Briggs Myers and her associates—became integral to the administration of large companies in the postindustrial service economy.

II. Katharine Briggs, Isabel Briggs Myers, and the Importance of ‘Type’ in American Society

Katharine Briggs, mother of Isabel Briggs Myers, read Jung’s *Psychological Types* shortly after its publication in English in 1923. Henceforth, she started referring to the book as her ‘Bible’ and became especially enamored with the chapter “The Type-Problem in Biography” as she had been analyzing the biographies of Benjamin Franklin, Ulysses S. Grant, Mark Twain, and Theodore Roosevelt for insight into the basic principles of what she considered to be healthy and productive personality development.⁴⁷ While corresponding with Jung, Katharine Briggs averred that she had in fact developed her own theory of type before reading Jung’s book, but that when she “recognized the completeness

⁴⁶ Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 173; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 139-40.

⁴⁷ It should be noted that Henry A. Murray—Harvard psychologist, fellow disciple of Jung, and creator of the Thematic Apperception Test—also turned to the study of biography in the 1920s, particularly the life and works of Herman Melville, as he began to develop his own theory of personality.

of Jung's formation of what she had only partially devised, she burned her notes."⁴⁸ Her early musings on personality had been drawn from her family life, namely her evaluation of herself, her daughter Isabel, and her son-in-law Clarence. She noted that she and her daughter were almost identical in personality—introverted and emotional—whereas Isabel's husband was extraverted and logical. She believed that these personality dynamics explained why she and her daughter got along so well, but also why Isabel gravitated toward someone like Clarence as a romantic partner.

Taking it upon herself to promulgate Jung's theory of personality for an American audience, Briggs published an article in *The New Republic* in December 1926 titled, "Meet Yourself: How to Use the Personality Paint Box." One of the first significant discussions of 'personality type' in an American periodical, Briggs wrote that, "To meet oneself through the good offices of Jung's theory of types is to be like the motorist who, after driving a car for years without knowledge of its mechanism...begins to understand the hows and whys of motor and transmission," going on to say that learning one's type was a "most valuable experience" for those who are "dissatisfied with their mental powers and self-starters and gearshifts."⁴⁹ Simplifying Jung's typology for a four-page article in a mass-market—if highbrow—publication, Briggs discussed the "four inescapable and basic human attitudes," or the "four primary character colors that each individual combines and blends according to his taste as he unconsciously paints

⁴⁸ Frances Wright Saunders, *Katharine and Isabel: Mother's Light, Daughter's Journey* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1991), 59.

⁴⁹ Katharine Cook Briggs, "Meet Yourself: How to Use the Personality Paint Box," *The New Republic*, December 22, 1926, 129; Saunders, *Katharine and Isabel*, 81.

in the detail of his own personality portrait, and thus reveals his type:” the *observant*, the *expectant*, the *personal*, and the *analytical*.⁵⁰ These attitudes corresponded to Jung’s categories of sensing, intuitive, feeling, and thinking. Briggs saved her discussion of the modifying traits of introversion and extraversion until the end of the article, making the grand claim that:

*“When the introverts have demonstrated that Jung’s theory of types is as important to human relations as Newton’s Laws of Motion are to physics, or anesthetics to surgery, or electricity to industry, then the extraverts will take it up and apply it to the uses of civilization as only the extraverts can, making of it the basis for the reorganization and modernization of education, morality, and religion.”*⁵¹

While Katharine Briggs published only one more article after this—a short treatise on child-rearing and education in 1928—her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, would at that point start incorporating her mother’s interest in personality types into her own work. An aspiring mystery writer, Briggs Myers continued Katharine’s exploration of type in two novels, each of which was dedicated to demonstrating the value of knowledge of type for both social harmony and for an effective work environment. Her first novel, *Murder Yet to Come* (1928), introduced three amateur detectives who work together to solve a murder. A playwright, his assistant, and an Army sergeant each possess “different gifts and different kinds of strengths:” “the playwright has a ‘quickness of insight’ to uncover the murderer’s identity, the sergeant takes ‘smashingly, effective action’ to apprehend him, while the assistant makes ‘slow, solid decisions’ to

⁵⁰ Briggs, “Meet Yourself,” 129.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 133.

protect the family of the victim from scandal.”⁵² The lessons that the novel is meant to instill in the reader are that knowledge of one’s personality type leads to harmony and efficiency when working in a team, and that the development of one’s type is of great benefit to the common good. Both of these ideas would become central to the use of the MBTI in the decades to come.

Her second novel, *Give Me Death* (1932), sees the three earlier detectives reconvene to solve another type of mystery. This time, however, the story revolves around a family of southern, landed gentry who proceed to kill themselves off when they are led to believe that “there is in their veins a strain of Negro blood.”⁵³ Briggs Myers, speaking through the character of the Army sergeant throughout the novel, approves of the family’s decision to kill themselves, arguing that they are doing what they must to keep deleterious personality traits out of the gene pool. Explicitly linking race to personality, she argued that there are better and worse personality traits, and that undesirable traits pool at the bottom of society’s racial and class hierarchies. Although she never explicitly disavowed the racist views espoused in *Give Me Death*, she did try to distance herself from the notion that there were better and worse personality types during the 1940s. Instead, she began to argue that all types were equally valuable so long as they were developed to their highest potential. Despite this fact, the notion that there are better and worse personality types is

⁵² Merve Emre, “Uncovering the Secret History of Myers-Briggs,” *Digg*, October 7, 2015, 6, <http://digg.com/2015/myers-briggs-secret-history>; Isabel Briggs Myers, *Murder Yet to Come* (Gainesville, FL: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, 1995 [1928]).

⁵³ Emre, “Secret History of Myers-Briggs,” 6; Isabel Briggs Myers, *Give Me Death* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1934 [1932]).

still baked into the official descriptions of each type, and reified by the positive evaluation of certain skills (and certain ‘types’ of people) in American society. And, as will be expounded upon later, companies have capitalized upon these distinctions to hire and promote a select few Myers-Briggs types (e.g., intuitive and thinking types) at rates that far exceed the others (such as sensing and feeling types).

In the early 1930s, when eugenics was still a powerful ideology in the United States but was experiencing increasing resistance among scientists, civil libertarians, and others alike, Briggs Myers’s novel may have seemed somewhat retrograde but was by no means uncommon. As one scientist-cum-historian has written, ‘public biologies’ were still very much in competition in the 1920s and 1930s, to the extent that while many geneticists would no longer have called themselves eugenicists, they still often supported eugenic policies, especially when they addressed supposed mental defects or character deficiencies.⁵⁴ Eugenic policies were also supported by much of the public, where the biologization of race and class distinctions was still quite popular.⁵⁵ This provided a scientific veneer for not only widespread sterilization campaigns but also policies ranging from Jim Crow to redlining to restrictive housing covenants.⁵⁶ Briggs Myers’s second novel reflected a positive evaluation of these types of ideas, reinforcing the notion that race, class, and personality were indelibly linked and

⁵⁴ David Barker, “The Biology of Stupidity: Genetics, Eugenics and Mental Deficiency in the Inter-War Years,” *British Journal for the History of Science* 22, no. 3 (September 1989).

⁵⁵ Ibid; Jacy L. Young, “The Biologist as Psychologist: Henry Fairfield Osborn’s Early Mental Ability Investigations,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 48, no. 3 (May 2012).

⁵⁶ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998 [1985]).

that eugenic policies that removed African-Americans from the gene pool would improve the 'pool' for personality types while keeping supposedly natural class distinctions intact. If, as historian of science Daniel Kevles has argued, eugenics played an outsized role in the development of genetics, it could also be said that eugenics shaped the development of the idea of personality types and the enterprise of personality testing in America, much as it provided the intellectual scaffolding for intelligence testing in the early 20th century.

III. Corporate Personnel Management and the Development of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

By the early 1940s, Briggs Myers was intent on creating a device, based on Jung's theory of psychological types, that would help companies find employees who would both enjoy their work and function diligently and harmoniously in their specific roles. Her interest in this endeavor came from reading an article in the January 1942 issue of *Reader's Digest*, "Fitting the Worker to the Job," that detailed the use of the Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale (HWTS) in industry.⁵⁷ By far the most popular non-projective personality test in use at the time, the Humm-Wadsworth was sold as a "device to place the worker in the proper niche, keep him happy, and increase production."⁵⁸ Psychologists Don Humm and Guy Wadsworth created their personality test while studying workers at a public utility corporation, where they had been tasked with helping to create a new personnel program.⁵⁹ The HWTS thus became the first personality test

⁵⁷ Saunders, *Katharine and Isabel*, 1-2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 2; Frank J. Taylor, "Fitting the Worker to the Job," *Reader's Digest*, January 1942, 12.

⁵⁹ Doncaster G. Humm and Guy W. Wadsworth, Jr., "The Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 92, no. 1 (July 1935): 163.

created specifically for the purposes of employee selection and placement in industry (as opposed to either military recruitment and training or the identification of mental disorder).

In the spring of 1942, Isabel Briggs Myers apprenticed herself to Edward N. Hay, an acquaintance of her husband and head of human resources for First Pennsylvania Bank in Philadelphia. Hay and his team had been using the Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale for a number of years as a way to sort employees into particular roles: tellers, salespeople, branch and corporate managers. By that time, Briggs Myers had already created scores of items that would eventually go into her own personality test, but she believed she needed familiarity with the design and scoring of a more widely used instrument in order to create her own test. Hay brought her on to administer the Humm-Wadsworth to all current employees, and to rescore all of the previously administered tests. As a result of her work throughout the spring and summer of 1942, she came to the conclusion that there was little to no correlation between a person's HWTS profile and his or her success at a particular job. However, instead of convincing her that an individual's personality profile and his or her effectiveness at work might be unrelated, this result in fact strengthened her resolve to create her own 'people-sorter,' one that would focus on "*type*, that is, on particular kinds of personalities and how those variations affect the relations of people to the world around them."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Saunders, *Katharine and Isabel*, 3.

Briggs Myers's interest in employee placement was critically influenced by the sociopolitical climate at the time, namely the anticipated return of millions of soldiers to civilian life after fighting in World War II. In mid-1942, as she continued to develop her own inventory of questions that would eventually make up the MBTI, she tested a number of them on the members of the V-12 Navy College Training Program at Swarthmore College. Designed to create a large pool of officers for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, the V-12 Program gave Briggs Myers her first pool of subjects and a novel data set, and also piqued her interest in creating an instrument that would help men find employment once the war was over. Her interest in the career prospects of military men was also reinforced by her son Peter's participation in the ROTC program at Swarthmore. In her attempt to ensure that Peter would find a job that suited his character and talents, Briggs Myers felt extra pressure to develop her test as quickly as possible.

Isabel Briggs Myers completed the first version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in the spring of 1943. The original version of the MBTI consisted of 172 questions, many of which had been formulated not only by Briggs Myers, but also by her mother Katharine, her husband Clarence, their children Peter and Ann, and a number of close friends.⁶¹ Like every subsequent version of the MBTI, Form A—as the original test was named—consisted entirely of forced-choice questions with two (and occasionally, three) answers from which to choose. Examples of some of the questions that could be found in early versions of the MBTI are: “Would you rather be considered (A) a practical person, or (B) an

⁶¹ Ibid, 110-11; McCaulley, “Isabel Briggs Myers,” 2.

ingenious person?” “Do you usually (A) show your feelings freely, or (B) keep your feelings to yourself?” and “Would you rather work under someone who is (A) always kind, or (B) always fair?” The remaining questions, much like the representative ones above, were far-ranging and asked about a person’s preferences regarding work, family, emotional display, and intellectual and creative pursuits. The MBTI thus attempted to provide a complete snapshot of an individual’s personality, skills, and interests in a test that took most people fewer than 30 minutes to complete.

Each of the 172 questions corresponded to one of four axes: Introversion (I) vs. Extraversion (E), Intuitive (N) vs. Sensing (S), Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F), or Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P). The Judging-Perceiving axis was not part of Jung’s original schema: Briggs Myers added this axis in the early 1940s in order to differentiate between those people who were more skilled in Judgment (thinking and feeling) and those who were more skilled in Perception (intuition and sensing), and thus more likely to lean on either their faculties of thinking or feeling or their abilities for sensing or perception. With one exception that will be discussed later, when scoring the test, the administrator marked one point for each question, depending on the axis to which that question corresponded. For instance, in the questions listed in the paragraph above, if a person put him or herself down as a practical person, a point would be added to his or her ‘Sensing’ score, whereas if one considered oneself an ingenious person, he or she would receive a point for ‘Intuition.’ Similarly, in the other two questions above, a person would receive points for ‘Feeling’ if he or she chose A, whereas he or she

would receive points for ‘Thinking’ if B were chosen. The scorer would then tally up the points and give a four-letter personality type, along with a description of that type’s abilities and interests and an explanation of how his or her type complemented some of the other fifteen types. In the not uncommon case that a person got the same amount of points on opposite sides of one of the axes, that person would receive a split letter (e.g., I/E or T/F) and be told to read the descriptions of both type and *decide for him or herself* which one was most fitting.

In 1943, shortly after the completion of Form A of the MBTI, Edward Hay offered Briggs Myers a contract for the use of her new technology in order to test employees at First Pennsylvania Bank. Months later, however, in late 1943, Hay would start working part-time at the bank as he set up his own management consulting firm, Edward N. Hay and Associates.⁶² Hay offered her a second contract with his new venture to administer the test to his first batch of clients, among them managers from General Foods and Campbell Soup Company. Shortly thereafter, in 1946, Hay would also become editor and publisher of *Personnel Journal*, a publication for so-called ‘people-management professionals.’⁶³ To both his clients and the readers of *Personnel Journal*, Hay promoted the MBTI as a tool that revealed the importance of understanding the

⁶² Edward N. Hay and Associates would eventually grow to become a multinational corporation known as the Hay Group, which in 2006 had 86 offices in 49 countries, and in 2015 was valued at \$452 million.

⁶³ Samuel Greengard, “How Edward ‘Ned’ Hay, a Former Personnel Journal Editor, Helped Redefine HR,” *Workforce Magazine*, June 28, 2012, <http://www.workforce.com/2012/06/28/how-edward-ned-hay-a-former-personnel-journal-editor-helped-redefine-hr/>.

‘people side’ of management.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, because each copy of the Indicator was sent out individually by Briggs Myers from her mother’s home in Swarthmore, the test’s influence could not expand much beyond this relatively small circle of businesspeople.

IV. The MBTI, IPAR, and the Growth of Personality Testing in Postwar America

With the help of Edward Hay and his resources, by the late 1940s, Briggs Myers was able to start printing thousands of copies of the MBTI for distribution. Soon after, the test began to be used for a number of research applications. Isabel’s father, Lyman Briggs, a member of the board of trustees at George Washington University, persuaded the medical school to start giving the MBTI to its entering classes of students for seven years, starting in 1951.⁶⁵ At the same time, Donald W. MacKinnon, director of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR) at Berkeley and former head of Station S for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), started giving the MBTI to research subjects at IPAR, alongside various other tests such as the CPI, the Rorschach, and the TAT. MacKinnon and his staff became steadfast supporters of Briggs Myers and her device: IPAR has included the MBTI in its standard battery of tests since its founding in 1949, and raised the profile of the test considerably—at least in psychological circles—when it was one of the assessments given to architects,

⁶⁴ *Personnel Journal* is still in print, having changed its name in 1996 to *Workforce Magazine* and become part of Human Capital Media, an “integrated information services and market-intelligence company focused on the business of talent.”

⁶⁵ Saunders, *Katharine and Isabel*, 113.

writers, and other professionals during IPAR's well-known creativity studies of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Briggs Myers and Donald MacKinnon's correspondence had in fact started in the early 1940s, when MacKinnon was head of the psychology department at Bryn Mawr College. He was quite taken with the MBTI from the start, in part because of Briggs Myers's persistence in seeking his opinion of her invention, but also due to his own personal interest in Jung and his dedication to Jungian analytical psychology.⁶⁶ Although MacKinnon did not use the MBTI in his work at Station S—the assessment and training facility for American spies and foreign intelligence operatives during World War II—it was nevertheless the first tool he brought over to IPAR when he helped found the Institute at Berkeley in 1949. Every one of the eight original members of IPAR had been part of the war effort, and all agreed that the MBTI would be given pride of place in their initial studies of 'efficiency,' 'adjustment,' and 'resilience' among non-clinical, non-psychiatric populations. These studies would evolve, by the mid-1950s, into the aforementioned creativity studies which have since become IPAR's most recognized contribution to psychological knowledge.⁶⁷

During their correspondence throughout the 1940s, Briggs Myers sent MacKinnon many of her writings on type. These included a number of indices she had extracted from her MBTI data, among them a "self-confidence, shyness, and

⁶⁶ Harrison G. Gough, "Along the Way: Recollections of Some Major Contributors to Personality Assessment" (address, American Psychological Association, New York, August 28, 1987), 16. Archives of the Institute of Personality and Social Research, University of California, Berkeley.

⁶⁷ Pierluigi Serraino, *The Creative Architect: Inside the Great Midcentury Personality Study* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2016), 23-25.

worry” index made up of 20 items from the test, as well as a 9-item questionnaire that she said could predict “stamina or indecision.”⁶⁸ In one of her missives to MacKinnon on July 11, 1945, she wrote about the connection between personality type and adjustment, noting that “Every type has its instances of good adjustment and bad. Every type has its quota of saints and sinners, heroes and criminals, supremely happy people and tragic neurotics.”⁶⁹ This sentiment, which would in time become entrenched among supporters of the MBTI, helped distance Briggs Myers from her earlier views concerning the connections between type, race, and class, and furthered the idea that it was better to improve upon one’s current path (assuming it was consistent with one’s personality type) than to strive to become something new or different. Tellingly, the one point that Briggs Myers underlined in her letter to MacKinnon was that, “Most important of all, the understanding of type has the effect of improving a man’s current adjustment to people and to his work.”⁷⁰

Similar to the beliefs of those who created and used the California Psychological Inventory, Briggs Myers’s statement offers a clear demonstration of the fact that postwar personality testing did not merely benefit the individual, but was in many ways in service of industrial, corporate ends. Although these tests were often couched in the language of helping individuals achieve their personal goals and become aware of their true selves, behind the scenes the creators and

⁶⁸ Correspondence from Isabel Briggs Myers to Donald W. MacKinnon, July 11, 1945, Box 21, Folder “All 5 McKinnon (sp) Archives,” Archives of the Institute of Personality and Social Research, University of California, Berkeley, Richmond, California.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

facilitators of these tests understood them as avenues for adjustment—of the individual to the group—rather than as ways to help individuals develop their unique identities. Fred Turner describes this situation well when he notes that, “The World War II effort to challenge mass psychology,” of which the MBTI and other personality tests developed and used in the 1930s and 1940s were a part, “gave rise to a new kind of mass individuality, but practiced in a polity that was already a marketplace as well.”⁷¹ The result was that each person had only a select ‘menu’ from which to choose his or her identity, personality, and style, a menu created in large part by psychologists, HR managers, and corporate executives, and which helped bring about the “turn towards the managerial mode of control that haunts our culture today.”⁷²

A number of contemporaneous critics were also concerned about the proliferation of personality tests and their related managerial practices. In his bestselling book *The Organization Man* (1956), William Whyte, then editor at *Fortune* magazine, encouraged corporate employees to give false answers on personality tests, lest they offer themselves up blithely to corporate control of every aspect of their lives and thoughts, both at work and at home. Whyte observed that:

*“when [a personality test] doesn’t screen out those who fail to match it, it will mask the amount of deviance in the people who do pass...all of us to some degree have a built-in urge to adjust to what we conceive as the norm, and in our search we can come to feel that in the vast ocean of normality that surrounds us we are different. We are the victims of one another’s facades.”*⁷³

⁷¹ Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷³ William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 215-16.

Similarly, in *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), sociologist David Riesman and his colleagues Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney envisioned an American society full of ‘other-directed’ individuals, so-called ‘well-heeled organization men’ who had lost their “sense of personal destiny” with the rise of “forbiddingly powerful and efficient institutions.”⁷⁴ They noted, however, that they were surely underestimating the consequences of the ‘personality market’ just coming into being at that time, a system in which people evaluated and crafted their identities through personality testing (among other techniques), in hopes of not only understanding themselves, but of ‘selling’ themselves to the highest bidder.⁷⁵

Thus, there is an irony at the heart of the postwar corporate form: although it was surely a time of massive growth for ‘forbiddingly powerful and efficient institutions,’ a rhetoric focused on the importance of ‘creativity’ and ‘abstract thinking’—concepts often associated with the unencumbered, liberated individual—was never more popular, in both business and popular culture. Techniques such as ‘brainstorming’ were pioneered by business executives who looked to harness individual creativity in order to achieve corporate goals. Giving people the freedom to ‘think for themselves,’ however, often meant giving them very specific tools and techniques through which such thinking could be recognized as valuable to the firm. As one recent historian has noted, “The creativity industry was in full swing in postwar American corporations, enabling

⁷⁴ David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963 [1950]), xlv, xxvi.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

creativity to be integrated into company culture, as many firms offered courses to their staff intended to awaken their creative streaks and bolster their productivity.”⁷⁶ It is these types of ventures that marked the beginning of postwar hive psychology: unlike earlier attempts at adjustment, these new techniques allowed individuals to express and develop their differences, but always within very specific parameters, and often towards the ends of productivity and profit. The integration of creative individuality with increasingly ‘powerful and efficient institutions’ has been one of the hallmark achievements of the Myers-Briggs and of personality testing in general.

V. IPAR, Creativity Studies, and the Educational Testing Service (ETS)

Before its widespread popularization in the 1980s, the most well-known use of the MBTI was in the creativity studies conducted at IPAR in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Three of the Institute’s founding members—Donald MacKinnon, Wallace Hall, and Harrison Gough (the creator of the CPI)—brought together some of the most prominent postwar architects for four days of personality testing. Architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson, Eero Saarinen, and I.M. Pei were assessed using a battery of tests (including the MBTI, the TAT, and the CPI, among more than a dozen others) in a testing regimen pioneered by Henry Murray at the Harvard Psychological Clinic and used by MacKinnon during his time as the head of Station S. Architects were chosen in this instance (although other groups, such as pilots, had been studied previously) because they

⁷⁶ Serraino, *The Creative Architect*, 19.

were supposed to embody the perfect mix of scientific and artistic ability. Thus, the ideal architect was supposed to be a model for the perfectly creative individual. Carried out with the monetary support of the Carnegie Corporation, the studies concluded that, at least on the MBTI, the most successful architects were INTPs: Introverted, Intuitive, Thinking, and Perceptive.⁷⁷

Before testing, the architects were divided into three groups based on level of success and prominence. After the tests had been completed and scored, the team at IPAR concluded that the least prominent group, Group III, had personalities that were fully adapted and normal, whereas the members of Group II had neurotic and conflicted tendencies. Those in Group I, however, were neither fully adjusted to society nor neurotic, but so fully self-realized, creative, and independent that adjustment to others or to society would have been a great loss both for them as individuals and for society as a whole. Thus, although it is true that adjustment was often the goal of personality testing, tests such as the MBTI have also been used since the 1950s to identify so-called 'leaders,' those individuals who *need to be adapted to* rather than who need to adapt to others.⁷⁸ That the leader was described in terms derived from humanistic psychology—self-actualized, self-realized—demonstrates the extent to which the movement had already influenced the research carried out at seemingly staid, corporate-financed institutions such as IPAR.

⁷⁷ Donald W. MacKinnon, "Creativeness as a Variable of Personality and Its Typological Relations" (paper, American Psychological Association, Montreal, August 27, 1973), 2; Serrano, *The Creative Architect*, 226-27; Isabel Briggs Myers, *Gifts Differing* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1980, 157-58.

⁷⁸ MacKinnon, "Creativeness as a Variable," 2.

At the same time, a joint study conducted with psychologists at Berkeley and Fordham Universities showed that almost every research psychologist on the two faculties received Intuitive (N) and Thinking (T) scores on the MBTI (the clinical psychologists, however, were split roughly evenly between Thinking (T) and Feeling (F)).⁷⁹ This result, in conjunction with the similar finding for prominent architects, led the staff at IPAR to surmise that ‘Intuitive Thinkers’ would be more likely to inhabit the highest levels of their respective professions. This preference for Intuitive and Thinking employees in higher-level corporate positions has continued to this day: at the management consulting firm McKinsey & Company and the hedge fund Bridgewater Associates, more than 60% of new hires score as ‘Intuitive’ on the MBTI, and top executives at both companies are said to be made up almost exclusively of the four ‘Intuitive Thinker’ types: ENTP, INTP, ENTJ, and INTJ.⁸⁰ This idea is echoed by David Keirsey, a well-known promoter of the MBTI, who estimates that over 80% of upper management in American corporations are ‘Intuitive Thinkers.’⁸¹ This is in addition to a widespread claim found in the business literature on the Myers-Briggs that CEOs

⁷⁹ Personality ‘Type Table’ drawn by Isabel Briggs Myers, January 30, 1947, Box 21, Folder ‘Clinical Psychologists,’ Archives of the Institute of Personality and Social Research, University of California, Berkeley, Richmond, California.

⁸⁰ Joseph Stromberg and Estelle Caswell, “Why the Myers-Briggs Test is Totally Meaningless,” Vox, October 8, 2015, <https://www.vox.com/2014/7/15/5881947/myers-briggs-personality-test-meaningless>; Lillian Cunningham, “Myers-Briggs: Does It Pay to Know Your Type?” *The Washington Post*, December 14, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-leadership/myers-briggs-does-it-pay-to-know-your-type/2012/12/14/eaed51ae-3fcc-11e2-bca3-aadc9b7e29c5_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.efbda1ee5174.

⁸¹ David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates, *Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types* (Carlsbad, CA: Prometheus Nemeses, 1978), 47-57; David Keirsey, *Please Understand Me 2: Temperament, Character, Intelligence* (Carlsbad, CA: Prometheus Nemeses, 1998).

who are this type are more savvy entrepreneurs and lead faster growing companies than those who are not.⁸²

The creativity studies at IPAR were the catalyst for the growth of the MBTI and its eventual acceptance among applied psychologists, particularly those in industrial and corporate settings. Henry Chauncey, co-founder and president of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) from its creation in 1947 until his retirement in 1970, heard about the MBTI and IPAR's creativity studies through Donald MacKinnon, his friend and former colleague at Harvard. Chauncey had in many ways revolutionized the process of college admissions through his campaign in the 1930s—waged alongside chemist and President of Harvard University James Bryant Conant—to introduce the SAT and other types of standardized tests into the admissions process. He believed the Myers-Briggs could engender a new type of revolution, one that would see schools and businesses using personality tests to find suitable students and employees.⁸³ Although Chauncey and ETS eventually procured the rights to publish and distribute the MBTI in 1956, many people in the company were openly hostile to personality testing and especially to the 'amateurish' MBTI. As Frances Wright Saunders, whose husband was a staff psychologist at ETS in the 1960s, has

⁸² Molly Owens, "Personality Type and Career Achievement: Does Your Type Predict How Far You'll Climb?" *Truity*, February 2015, 3, <https://www.truity.com/sites/default/files/PersonalityType-CareerAchievementStudy.pdf>; Kate Taylor, "What Your Personality Type Says About Your Career Destiny," *Entrepreneur*, August 2, 2015, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/249031>.

⁸³ Tamar Lewin, "Henry Chauncey Dies at 97; Shaped Admissions Testing For the Nation's Colleges," *The New York Times*, December 4, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/04/nyregion/henry-chauncey-dies-at-97-shaped-admission-testing-for-the-nation-s-colleges.html>; Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of American Meritocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), ch. 1.

written, a good dose of sexism and professional pride (given that Briggs Myers was not a professional psychologist) led many at the company to dismiss the MBTI out of hand. Author Annie Paul notes that many psychologists at ETS derided the Myers-Briggs as ‘unscientific rubbish’ and that an internal evaluation of the Indicator noted that, “A veil of suspicion hangs over it. It had an unorthodox origin, it is wedded to a somewhat unfashionable theory, and the enthusiasm it has aroused in some people has provoked sterner opposition in others.”⁸⁴ Paul also notes that even the manual that ETS belatedly released to accompany the instrument “read more like a harsh critique of the test than a helpful guide to its use.”⁸⁵

Despite the internal squabbles over the MBTI at the Educational Testing Service and its relatively low sales numbers, being allied with ETS gave the test the kind of visibility and credibility it would not have had otherwise. One of the results of the partnership between Briggs Myers and ETS was that her test was added in the early 1960s to the *Buros Mental Measurements Yearbook*, the standard repository for new psychological tests that have appeared on the market. While this would set the stage for the ‘rediscovery’ of the test in the early 1970s by one of the most significant advocates of the MBTI in the last three decades of the twentieth century, Mary McCaulley, it did not stop the test from sliding into obscurity during the 1960s, with many research and applied

⁸⁴ Annie Murphy Paul, *The Cult of Personality Testing: How Personality Tests Are Leading Us to Miseducate Our Children, Mismanage Our Companies, and Misunderstand Ourselves* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 118-19.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 119.

psychologists forsaking the use of tests in general.⁸⁶ ETS, for instance, refused to distribute new copies of the MBTI for non-research purposes which meant that it could not proliferate in human resources settings like it did in the early 1950s (of course, non-official copies still made the rounds in offices). In addition, personality tests were not as integral to corporate development in the 1960s as they would become in the 1970s: because of the relative lack of regulations or employee protections on issues such as race and gender, these markers as well as those of class, education, and personal connection did the work in hiring and promotion that, from the 1970s on, would be done partially through the use of ‘objective’ tools such as personality tests. Additionally, the ‘people-skills’ that the MBTI was supposed to help identify and cultivate became much more important during the 1970s as the postindustrial service economy flourished, whereas the 1960s could be considered the last decade of the American industrial economy that had emerged in the late 19th century. In these ways, the 1960s marked a decade of both obscurity and transition for the MBTI.

VI. Setting the Stage: Popular Management Literature in the 1960s and 1970s

During the 1960s, a number of prominent psychologists started writing popular books on business and management, using insights from humanistic psychology to foster motivation and productivity in the workplace. For instance, Frederick Herzberg, in his classic *Motivation to Work* (1959), argued that employees who were consistently challenged by their work and who were tasked

⁸⁶ During the 1960s, personality testing was often replaced with detailed interview protocols and such techniques as mock scenario planning and other sorts of situation-based evaluations.

with greater responsibility over time would become more motivated and experience higher levels of job fulfillment. In other words, Herzberg argued that job satisfaction and productivity were directly correlated, and that job satisfaction could be achieved not by making work easier or less stressful, but instead by ensuring that good work was rewarded and bad work was punished. Herzberg's studies started a trend toward emphasizing 'self-management' in corporate America, advancing the idea that employees at every level of the corporate hierarchy would be more productive if they believed they had some agency over their own success and failure. This did not change the fact, however, that the measures of success were not created by the employee, but by his or her superiors (or by shareholders seeking higher profits). Thus, calls for self-management elided the fact that almost every employee was still hewed in by the designs of the company and its owners.

Herzberg's work set the stage for Abraham Maslow's management studies at the electronics firm Saga Corporation in the early 1960s, the results of which were published in his 1965 work *Eupsychian Management*. For Maslow, the best kind of managers resembled humanistic therapists, tasked with creating a psychologically healthy environment in which individuals could develop and express themselves through their work. Herzberg believed similarly that motivation was a 'hygienic' issue, such that more motivated individuals evinced better mental health which resulted in a greater commitment to work, to their organization, and to their colleagues. Maslow believed that "These highly evolved individuals assimilate their work into the identity, into the self, i.e., work actually

becomes part of the self, part of the individual's definition of himself."⁸⁷ Maslow's fame in the 1960s helped popularize humanistic management tactics and gave credibility to the discourse on identity and the self within the ranks of corporate management and human resources, especially considering Maslow's intention to demonstrate that those who felt compelled to work in order to express themselves were in fact more self-actualized individuals than those who saw work merely as a 'job.' As a result, the humanistic management discourse on 'identity' offered employees a sense of countercultural self-exploration, whereas for their employers, it created an optimal system in which they were no longer seen as antagonists, but instead as 'therapists' guiding their employees to higher levels of personal satisfaction and growth.

By the 1970s, popular psychological management tracks would center around two concepts, leadership and communication, each of which had branched off from the more general discussion of motivation.⁸⁸ One of the more prominent authors of these types of works, Harvard Business School professor Abraham Zaleznik, spilled much ink about the difference between 'leaders'—those whose vision and sense of singular purpose transformed a company—and 'managers'—those who used traditional skills of organization and problem-solving to ensure that a company continued to function from day to day.⁸⁹ Another prominent psychologist, Michael Maccoby, wrote about the importance of leadership in the postindustrial corporation, asserting that inspiring, visionary

⁸⁷ Abraham H. Maslow, *Eupsychian Management* (New York: Richard D. Irwin, 1965), 1.

⁸⁸ Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2005), 63-78.

⁸⁹ Abraham Zaleznik, "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?" *Harvard Business Review* 55, no. 3 (May/June 1977).

leaders do not care about money or status but instead only care about making their followers become as ‘self-actualized’ as possible. Maccoby’s works delineated a motivational theory disguised as a discussion of leadership characteristics: the best leaders ensured that their followers practiced self-leadership, such that they cared about their work because it led to personal satisfaction and individual success. The tangible rewards of increased motivation, however, went mostly to the leaders, whereas the psychological benefits could be shared amongst the employees.

Both explicitly and implicitly, these management treatises from the 1960s and 1970s made the assumption that motivation, leadership, and communication skills were all related to a person’s personality profile. As a result, the use of personality tests at all levels of the corporate hierarchy—from the ‘leadership development’ and ‘executive search’ programs aimed at top management, to the standard battery of personality tests given to lower-level job applicants—became crucial to the functioning of large American companies. The expansion of the industry for personality testing required a change in the status quo, however, as the publishers of these instruments had become wary of their own products. However, if in 1970 personality testing seemed passé, by 1980 it was impossible to deny its impact on many aspects of corporate life.

VII. Discrimination and Shifting Views of Personality in Corporations and Academia

In 1970, ETS was second only to The Psychological Corporation—founded in 1921 by famous psychometrician James McKeen Cattell—as the largest test

publishing company in the United States. As a consequence of its success, ETS seems to have been unaware of the ways in which personality testing had gained traction in corporate human resources at the time, instead choosing to focus its efforts on publishing aptitude and skills tests for educational and clinical functions. ETS's conservatism was equally matched by that of The Psychological Corporation: as Briggs Myers's contract with ETS was coming to an end in the early 1970s, she reached out to The Psychological Corporation, only to be told that they too did not believe personality testing to be a viable business. The prior success of both of these corporations seems to have insulated them from the social and cultural changes going on in the late 1960s and 1970s, when the search for identity and self-understanding led many individuals to focus on the importance of personality.

Nevertheless, while the 1970s would see the resurgence of the MBTI and the exponential growth of personality testing in corporations, the same could not be said for testing in academic psychological research. This was due in large part to Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel's devastating critique of the idea of personality—and the methods through which it was evaluated—in his 1968 book *Personality and Assessment*. In his book, Mischel demonstrated that the variability of human behavior was better explained by reference to environment or situation than anything resembling stable personality or character traits; his studies showed that cross-situational consistency for individuals rarely exceeded 40%, and as such it made more sense to consider behavior to be shaped by

environment rather than personality.⁹⁰ Mischel's work marked a watershed and had the effect of drying up a lot of government funding for personality research. As a result, many psychologists moved into either social psychology—which was experiencing enormous growth at the time—or into purely applied fields such as industrial or educational psychology. Those who continued to conduct personality research were often forced to find funding through corporate ties, while others left academia entirely to do corporate consulting for business and industry. As former IPAR member Ravenna Helson has recently remarked, from the early 1970s to the early 1990s—during the height of the so-called 'person-situation debate'—getting government funding was enormously difficult, such that the only viable ways to fund personality research were through corporate consulting, starting one's own assessment firm, or being lucky enough to receive a multi-year grant from the Rockefeller or Carnegie Foundations.⁹¹ All of this is to note that while there was a 20-year lull in personality research and test development in academia, personality psychologists redirected much of their attention and effort towards making personality testing a respected and essential part of the corporate environment.

One of the main reasons why personality testing became attractive to human resources executives in the 1970s was the influx of new types of employees—namely women and minorities—into white-collar jobs. Because of

⁹⁰ Walter Mischel, *Personality and Assessment* (New York: John Wiley, 1968), 70-72.

⁹¹ Ravenna Helson, "Oral History Project Interview," interview by Bob Levenson, Institute of Personality and Social Research, June 11, 2014, video, <http://ipsr.berkeley.edu/resources/oral-history-project/oral-history/ravenna-helson-interview>; Ravenna Helson, "The Mind of An Architect," *99% Invisible*, July 12, 2016, audio, <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/the-mind-of-an-architect/>.

the need to comply with recently-passed equal opportunity and anti-nepotism laws, many HR managers saw personality tests as a suitable way to screen for viable candidates using characteristics other than race, gender, or family and personal connections. Indeed, the MBTI was publicized as a gender-neutral test—despite the fact that, as will be discussed shortly, women and men were scored differently until 1998—that could especially help women find their niche within corporate America. Personality testing was also thought to facilitate the creation and maintenance of the ‘employee communications programs’ that popped up in corporations in the 1970s; as the president of a prominent advertising and human resources research firm noted, a ‘human resources revolution’ had swept into business during the decade, ushering in a “new era of employee communications...in which the company meets the work force directly...lets everyone in on political or legislative issues that directly concern the company and hence its workers, and presents management executives as people.”⁹² Although this description paints an overly rosy picture of corporate harmony, the fact is that effective communication—both up and down the corporate ladder—was now seen as integral to success, and personality tests were marketed as facilitators of this type of feedback.

When Briggs Myers first released the MBTI in 1943, very few women worked in corporate America, and it was only in the early 1970s that women began to make up a significant portion of the white-collar workforce.⁹³ There was

⁹² Arnold Deutsch, *The Human Resources Revolution: Communicate or Litigate* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 131.

⁹³ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), ch. 4.

only one significant difference between the original version of the MBTI, Form A, and Form G, the version in use during the test's rise to fame from 1977 to 1998. This difference is that—in recognition of the fact that the test was being used almost exclusively by corporations for human resources decisions—Briggs Myers and the staff at the Center for Applications of Psychological Type shortened the test from 192 to 94 questions, such that the test could be taken by a job applicant in under 20 minutes. One of the more striking things that did not change, however, was that on the Thinking-Feeling Scale, more weight was given to women's Feeling responses than men's. As a result, it was possible for a man and a woman to give the exact same responses on the test, but for the woman to be labeled as Feeling whereas the man would be considered Thinking. Given the preference for Thinking individuals in executive positions, this demonstrates one way in which personality tests discriminated against women job-seekers.

The MBTI, like any technology—and in this case, an algorithmic technology—puts into practice the values of its creators and users, and reifies the social relations and cultural politics in which it was developed. As data scientist Cathy O'Neil has recently delineated, the relatively simple algorithms that are used by human resources departments to decide what types of personality scores are acceptable—and thus what types of people will be hired, trained, and promoted—are themselves the complex product of the interweaving of historical social norms with stubbornly persistent corporate presumptions.⁹⁴ The result was

⁹⁴ Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (New York: Broadway, 2016), 109-10.

that many women were tracked into less desirable and less well-paying jobs in the corporate hierarchy—such as, somewhat ironically, human resources itself—because of their results on the Myers-Briggs. Similarly, because it is relatively easy to fake one’s answers on the MBTI, many people who have been considered for middle or upper management have crafted their answers so as to appear as ‘Intuitive Thinkers’ and thus be more likely to be hired or promoted. Although it would seem as if these individuals were merely following William Whyte’s sage advice from the 1950s—to disrupt the whole system of testing by providing false answers—the result has in fact been to cement the idea that NTs are the best higher-level executives, despite the fact that many successful people in these roles have actually given false answers to conform to that standard.

VIII. Mary McCaulley, the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), and the Creation of a National Personality Standard

The rising fortunes of the MBTI in the 1970s can in large part be attributed to the efforts of one woman: University of Florida psychologist Mary McCaulley. Her research, which focused on the clinical evaluation and assessment of women, led her to peruse the latest edition of the *Buros Mental Measurements Yearbook* for any assessments created either by or for women. The only one she came across was Isabel Briggs Myers’s MBTI. McCaulley ordered copies of the test from ETS and distributed them to her introductory classes, in addition to taking the test herself. She was immediately taken with the penetrating nature of the test, concurring with the evaluation of one of her students who said of the Myers-

Briggs that, “I feel like it X-rayed my soul.”⁹⁵ From that point forward, McCaulley would become one of the most forceful advocates for the MBTI, just as many other research psychologists were moving away from personality psychology and personality testing. McCaulley’s boosterism for the MBTI—and her institutional affiliation with a major research university—was particularly fortuitous for Briggs Myers, who had become increasingly pessimistic about her invention’s future, given its lack of support at ETS, the waning status of personality psychology, and the increasing marginalization of Jung’s literary and mythological approach within academic psychology.

McCaulley convinced the University of Florida counseling center to start using the Myers-Briggs with rising seniors who came in for career advice. In this way, she procured several thousand dollars from the University of Florida for MBTI research focusing on career selection and guidance within the student population. At that point, she and Briggs Myers formed a partnership in order to secure a grant from the American Medical Student Association (AMSA), convincing them to support the creation of a Myers-Briggs research center by displaying the data gathered during the 1950s on George Washington University medical students. Opened in 1974 and named the Typology Laboratory, this research center had the mission to “provide...guidance in the application of current knowledge of Jungian types to practical problems, particularly education and manpower.”⁹⁶ By the beginning of the next school year, the Typology

⁹⁵ Paul, *Cult of Personality Testing*, 120-21.

⁹⁶ Saunders, *Katharine and Isabel*, 157.

Laboratory had been renamed the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT) and moved off-campus, having outgrown its original space on the University of Florida campus. Despite moving off-campus, CAPT was still associated with the University of Florida, and the majority of its staff were faculty members from the school's Department of Psychology.

In 1975, McCaulley and Briggs Myers went searching for a new publisher for the MBTI. After both ETS and The Psychological Corporation had declined to publish the test, they connected with Harrison Gough, IPAR faculty member and co-founder of the test publishing company Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP) in Palo Alto, CA. Gough had been using the MBTI for 25 years as a researcher at IPAR, and saw this as a unique opportunity to procure the rights to a useful and potentially lucrative technology. Gough and his business partner, Stanford psychologist Jack Black, were enthusiastic enough about signing the MBTI that they offered McCaulley and Briggs Myers a 12% royalty—the standard being 10%-on sales of the test, and wrote up a contract that split the duties and profits from future MBTI consulting and training equally between CPP and CAPT.⁹⁷ This partnership catalyzed the exponential growth of the Myers-Briggs in the late 1970s and 1980s. By 1980, CAPT would become independent of the University of Florida, although most of its members were still faculty in the Department of Psychology. While sales of the test alone would bring in \$250,000 in 1980, by the late 1980s both CPP and CAPT were bringing in over \$5 million from both sales of the test and their joint training workshops (yearly sales figures, including

⁹⁷ Ibid, 162.

MBTI training and consulting, now approach \$30 million annually). Companies such as Proctor & Gamble, General Motors, Transamerica, IBM, and McKinsey & Company all began to use the Myers-Briggs extensively in the 1980s, as did government agencies such as the State Department, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency.⁹⁸

The network of businesses and government agencies that used the MBTI was anchored by the transcontinental relationship between CPP in Palo Alto and CAPT at the University of Florida. The Berkeley and University of Florida psychologists who worked at CPP and CAPT respectively began consulting for corporations and institutions across the country, organizing multiday training seminars in most large cities in the United States. From the East Coast to the West Coast, Ph.D. social scientists with university affiliations traveled throughout the country giving the impression to human resources managers, business consultants, and executive search directors that the MBTI was a well-accepted and highly regarded instrument within academic psychology. The truth, however, was that the marketing of the Myers Briggs to business and industry was necessitated by *a lack of* acceptance of the instrument by a large proportion of academic psychologists (even those who saw personality psychology and testing in a favorable light were still largely skeptical of the MBTI). The proliferation of the MBTI created a nationwide standard for personality types in organizations, similar to the work that Isabel Briggs Myers's father, Lyman Briggs, had done in

⁹⁸ Ahmed, "Is Myers-Briggs Up to the Job?," <https://www.ft.com/content/8790ef0a-d040-11e5-831d-09f7778e7377>.

the mid-twentieth century as the Director of the U.S. Bureau of Standards, where he was tasked with setting the standards for the purification of uranium for both civilian and military use, one of the direct offshoots of which was the Manhattan Project.⁹⁹

In 1981, at the 4th Annual MBTI Conference at Stanford University, a small journal published at Mississippi State University called *The Bulletin of Research in Psychological Type* became subsumed by CAPT and changed its name to the *Journal of Psychological Type*. The journal was (and still is) dedicated to publishing research done exclusively with the MBTI. Although no top-tier psychologist has published in the *Journal of Psychological Type*, and only a handful of well-known psychologists have published MBTI research in any journal (the exceptions being a number of IPAR researchers, such as Harrison Gough and Ravenna Helson), the existence of the *Journal* gives CAPT and the MBTI a level of legitimacy among non-psychologists, particularly those HR managers and businesspeople who believe an entire academic ecosystem supports MBTI research. In creating a multifaceted network of research, publishing, and consulting, the members of CAPT and CPP were able to profit off of the push toward self-development in corporate America. The Myers-Briggs capitalized on the ways in which the concept of personality became a means to both self-understanding and corporate profit in the last three decades of the

⁹⁹ "Who Was Lyman J. Briggs?" Michigan State University, accessed February 10, 2018, <http://lymanbriggs.msu.edu/future/LymanBriggs.cfm>.

twentieth century. The test became the backbone of an entire industry of developing and selling the self for the benefit of business.

IX. Conclusion

In a 1987 *Fortune* article titled, “Personality Tests are Back,” journalist Thomas Moore wrote that personality tests had become indispensable in corporate America as businesses had started “lapping up” the idea of “psychological type.”¹⁰⁰ The MBTI was well-suited for a corporate environment in which ‘teamwork’ and ‘communication’ were crucial for productivity, given that the goal of the Myers-Briggs, as stated in its accompanying manual, is to manage conflict and increase human understanding.¹⁰¹ The MBTI has often been used in management development programs, where it can “help executives better understand how they come across to others who may see things differently,” and in teambuilding exercises, where “talking about what type you are and what I am...proves to be an unthreatening way for people to raise and resolve problems.”¹⁰² Jungian type theory, which had been out of vogue in academic psychology since the late 1960s, was booming in applied organizational psychology, sometimes by being interwoven with more reputable theories; at the global insurance company Transamerica, for example, the creator of their management development program merged Harvard psychologist David McClelland’s ideas about the motivating personality factors of the ‘need for

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Moore, “Personality Tests Are Back,” *Fortune*, March 30, 1987.

¹⁰¹ Isabel Briggs Myers and Mary H. McCaulley, *Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1985), 1-5, 77-79.

¹⁰² Thomas Moore, “Personality Tests Are Back,” *Fortune*, March 30, 1987, 76, 77.

achievement' and the 'need for power' (two concepts that will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3) with Jungian type theory in his attempt to hire, promote, and train more productive managers.¹⁰³

By the early 1990s, Harvard organizational psychologist Robert Benfari wrote that “no self-respecting personnel officer could afford to be ignorant of this instrument [the MBTI].”¹⁰⁴ He made this statement, in part, because the Myers-Briggs was being used to harness, evaluate, and develop the three things that now seemed indispensable to American business: (1) teamwork, (2) communication, and (3) leadership. These concepts had taken over the business world in the 1980s as corporations moved from less authoritarian management styles to those that characterized executives as ‘mediators’ and ‘motivators.’ The goal of top executives was to provide a *vision* for his or her subordinates, rallying them to a cause which they could then take up as their own. As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have noted, the leader’s vision “guarantees the workers’ commitment without recourse to compulsion, by making everyone’s work meaningful,” and that by giving up more authoritarian modes of control in favor of ‘charisma’ and ‘vision,’ executives were able to induce their subordinates to practice more effective (and less costly) forms of self-control.¹⁰⁵

Much of the intellectual underpinning for this changing conception of leadership in the last three decades of the twentieth century was provided by those authors associated with the ‘human relations school,’ such as Abraham

¹⁰³ Ibid, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Benfari, *Understanding Your Management Style: Beyond the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 75-76, 81.

Maslow, Frederick Herzberg, and David McClelland. Through his use of the Thematic Apperception Test at Harvard University and with clients at his consulting firm McBer & Company, McClelland came to believe that the ‘need for power’ was the most important attribute of an effective manager. Those executives who had a need for power (that is, the need to influence others) coupled with high ‘impulse control’ were said to be able to turn all of their followers into (self-) leaders; those who used the MBTI in corporate settings argued that ‘Intuitive Thinkers’ (NTs) were most often these types of individuals. Executives were also called upon to learn the personality types of all those who worked for them, in order to facilitate better communication and thus increase motivation.

By 1995, Consulting Psychologists Press had trademarked the slogan “The Myers-Briggs Company,” despite the fact that it published over 400 different types of assessments. Largely on the back of the success of the Myers-Briggs, the company had revenues of \$13.5 million in 1995 and employed close to 100 people. By the start of the 21st century, CPP’s revenue would climb to \$30 million a year.¹⁰⁶ This revenue was derived not only from the licensing and distribution of the test itself, but from the courses that CPP and CAPT offered all across the country to HR managers, consultants, and career counselors who wanted to become certified to score and assess the MBTI. The 4-day course, which currently costs \$1695, brings in over \$20 million per year, which is then distributed equally

¹⁰⁶ Invitation to Consulting Psychologists Press 40th Anniversary Dinner 1995-1996, Box 15, Folder ‘Pubs,’ Archives of the Institute of Personality and Social Research, University of California, Berkeley, Richmond, California.

to both CPP and CAPT. Myers-Briggs certification has, in many ways, become a necessity for human resources managers and career counselors; as one HR manager has recently said, “[companies] just want to see that you have it.”¹⁰⁷ Because MBTI certification is a recognizable symbol of facility with personality testing, even if a specific company does not use the test, having that credential implies that you have the skills necessary to evaluate others. As a result, MBTI training has become all but essential for many in the human resources field.

By the year 2000, the Myers-Briggs had become a test with which many American adults were familiar, even if they had not taken it. This familiarity can be attributed not only to its ubiquity in corporate human resources, but also to its popularization on the internet. Alongside tests such as the Enneagram, the IPIP (International Personality Item Protocol), and Daniel Goleman’s EQ (Emotional Quotient) Test, the MBTI has popped up in various unlicensed forms across the internet. In addition, bestselling books such as David Keirsey’s *Please Understand Me* (1978) and *Please Understand Me 2* (1998), as well as Isabel Briggs Myers’s own *Gifts Differing* (1980) contained several modified, non-copyrighted versions of the MBTI that people could use to assess their own personality types. As a result, many people who want to know their Myers-Briggs personality type are now able to test themselves in the comfort of their own homes. The popularization of the Myers-Briggs, coupled with the network that has maintained its legitimacy as a serious research tool and corporate

¹⁰⁷ Ahmed, “Is Myers-Briggs Up to the Job?,” <https://www.ft.com/content/8790ef0a-d040-11e5-831d-09f7778e7377>.

instrument, have secured the success and continued relevance of the MBTI in America's organizational society.

Chapter 2

Self-Development and the Expansion of the California Mindset: The Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR), Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP), and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), 1949-2000

This chapter explores the networks of creation, distribution, and use of one of the most popular postwar personality tests: the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). Created by University of California, Berkeley psychologist Harrison Gough in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the CPI took its inspiration from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), one of the most commonly used tests of personality disorder and psychopathology in the second half of the twentieth century. However, whereas the MMPI was often associated with psychiatric diagnosis, the CPI was dubbed the ‘sane man’s MMPI’ and found its niche in educational and, especially, in corporate settings.¹⁰⁸ Much like the Myers-Briggs, a person’s CPI report focused on the “favorable and positive aspects of personality rather than the morbid and pathological,” and was thus suited to the identification of skills, interests, and potential ability rather than an individual’s flaws or weaknesses.¹⁰⁹

The CPI was designed to measure those “personality characteristics important for social living and social interaction” and as such it has often been

¹⁰⁸ George Domino, “A Review of the California Psychological Inventory,” in *Test Critiques: Volume I*, edited by Daniel J. Keyser and Richard C. Sweetland (Kansas City, MO: Test Corporation of America, 1985), 150.

¹⁰⁹ Harrison G. Gough, *Manual for the California Psychological Inventory* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1969 [1956]), 5.

used to promote ‘adjustment’ to group situations, such as those found in educational and organizational environments.¹¹⁰ However, by including scales such as ‘Self-acceptance,’ ‘Sense of well-being,’ and ‘Self-control,’ the CPI also capitalized on the humanistic push for self-actualization and individual development that flourished during the 1960s and 1970s. Corporations used the CPI and similar instruments in their attempts to foster ‘individual creativity’ and ‘personal efficiency’ which many executives and management theorists believed were crucial determinants leading directly to greater group productivity and higher profits.¹¹¹ The ideology of self-development and self-actualization radiated out from Northern California as personality tests and various other psychological tools and therapies designed at places such as IPAR, Stanford, and Esalen proliferated in the wider culture in general and in corporate America in particular. Aided by assessments such as the CPI, human resources managers tried to promote employee self-growth and self-management as the necessary building blocks for a firm’s continued profit and growth.

Gough developed most of the scales of the CPI at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR) during the first half-decade of its existence. Endowed in 1949 with an initial grant of \$100,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation, IPAR was founded to “develop successful techniques to identify the personality characteristics which make for successful and happy

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Pierluigi Serraino, *The Creative Architect: Inside the Great Midcentury Personality Study* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2016), 16-19; Alex F. Osborn, *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem-Solving* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), x.

adjustment to modern industrial society.”¹¹² The CPI was created with this same goal in mind, but much like IPAR itself, it was also a product of the overlapping milieu of the San Francisco Bay Area’s burgeoning military-academic-industrial complex and the humanistic psychology of the nascent Human Potential Movement. As a result, the test reflected the interests of academic and clinical psychologists, self-seekers and proto-hippies, as well as corporate executives and government officials who all hoped that such ‘technologies of the self’ would promote and integrate individual and collective goals. The promise of the CPI’s success on this front helped spread the assessment widely in research, educational, and business settings, a proliferation facilitated by the creation of Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP), a privately-owned publishing company whose sole task, at least at the time of its creation, was the printing, distribution, and marketing of the CPI.

Sociologist William Davies has documented how the effort to produce happy, ‘well-adjusted’ individuals through the use of personality tests boomed during the postwar decades, with the introduction of the CPI (1956), the Beck Depression Inventory (1961), the Type A Scale (1971), and hundreds of similar measures.¹¹³ These tests, while often created for the purposes of psychological research and medical diagnosis, quickly found a home in the human resources departments of large organizations, where they seemed capable of showing individuals how to ‘grow’ and ‘change,’ while at the same time allowing HR

¹¹² Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 46.

¹¹³ William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (New York: Verso, 2015), 175.

managers to direct such growth toward company ends. As Barbara Ehrenreich and a number of other scholars have demonstrated, however, the advocacy of happiness and personal growth in the workplace has often led not to genuine self-fulfillment or a greater enjoyment of work, but instead to a coercive type of therapeutic environment in which employees are expected to demonstrate their devotion to the organization and to their job by constantly signaling their commitment to self-development. In addition, employees are prodded to share the most intimate parts of themselves, including their wants, desires, and fears, which are then put into their personnel files and trotted out during annual reviews, promotion discussions, and salary negotiations.¹¹⁴ Of course, such details are often used to convince employees that their own self-stated goals would be better achieved through acquiring new tasks or a new job title rather than through an actual promotion or raise.

This chapter delineates the network of individuals and institutions that helped make the CPI one of the most popular assessments in management consulting and training, leadership development, and executive search. As previously noted, this network revolved around a dyad of institutions crucial to the enterprise of postwar personality testing: the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR) at Berkeley and Palo Alto's Consulting

¹¹⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 96; Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jessica Grogan, *Encountering America: Humanistic Psychology, Sixties Culture, and the Shaping of the Modern Self* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012), 317; and Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 155-56.

Psychologists Press (CPP). This network parlayed government monies for psychological research into private hands in the form of a test publishing company, which then sold its wares to corporations throughout the United States and beyond. The history of the CPI and these institutions also reveals the broader ways in which personality testing became an enterprise from which hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue are derived annually.¹¹⁵ Like many other self-assessments, the CPI was promoted as a tool to help individuals become more developed and self-aware, but its history highlights a more nuanced reality in which tests of this sort were used to help individuals accept and value their place within a new postindustrial, service-oriented economy and society.

I. Personality Testing and the Culture of Personality in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

The status of psychological testing was bolstered in the early twentieth century by the purported success of the Army Alpha and Beta Tests in identifying potential soldiers and officers during World War I. Developed by psychologist Robert Yerkes, the tests were supposed to measure “verbal ability, ability to follow directions, and knowledge of information,” and were used to determine not just a person’s ability to serve, but also his job classification and potential for leadership.¹¹⁶ Although intelligence tests continued to be developed and promoted as significant new inventions that measured a key aspect of the human psyche, by the 1920s it had become clear to some that intelligence tests did not

¹¹⁵ Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided*, 12.

¹¹⁶ “History of Military Testing,” *Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery*, accessed January 15, 2018, http://official-asvab.com/history_rec.htm.

accurately predict one's success or ingenuity in applied settings, particularly at work. As Gordon Allport, the so-called 'father of American personality psychology,' wrote in his 1922 Ph.D. dissertation, "the recent development of mental tests has served to accentuate the need for methods for the measurement of personality, for it is recognized that this aspect of a man's nature, even more than his intelligence, determines the success of his adjustments to his environment."¹¹⁷

Those psychologists who worked on the creation and administration of mental tests often set up businesses to profit off of these new technologies of evaluation and classification. As historian Joel Isaac has noted, "psychologists involved in Army personnel selection considered mental testing an applied social technology and later sought to convert their knowledge into profit through the establishment of consultancies like the Psychological Corporation and the Scott Company."¹¹⁸ Although intelligence tests were a popular type of product for these companies, they also increasingly created, licensed, and distributed personality tests, at a time when the culture was shifting from one of 'character' to one of 'personality.' Historian Warren Susman has argued that a 'culture of character' that emphasized a person's connection to family, place, and religion—concomitant with a belief that the individual was constituted by social and institutional forces outside of him or herself and which promoted such values as

¹¹⁷ Gordon Allport, "An Experimental Study of the Traits of Personality" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1922), Preface; Ian A.M. Nicholson, *Inventing Personality: Gordon Allport and the Science of Selfhood* (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2003), 87.

¹¹⁸ Joel Isaac, *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 160.

sacrifice, honor, and duty—was predominant up until the end of the 1910s.¹¹⁹ However, because of increased immigration and internal migration during the previous three decades, coupled with the shift from a producer to a consumer society and from industrial to finance capitalism, familial and geographic bonds began to wane. The result was the growth of a more individualistic culture, one that required judging people on their self-presentation and those more immediately evident attributes that could be sussed out in a relatively short amount of time.

The writings of such popular authors as Ralph Waldo Trine, Dale Carnegie, and Norman Vincent Peale stressed the importance of a certain type of self-development, one geared quite explicitly towards the ‘selling’ of oneself to clients and employers in a world where there were fewer personal or familial bonds on which to rely. As a result, personality testing boomed in the middle decades of the twentieth century as organizations grew and were forced to hire and promote a seemingly anonymous and increasingly heterogeneous workforce. At the same time, employees were also interested in evaluating themselves and using that knowledge to promote themselves and their traits in an effort to climb the ladder of corporate success. Evaluating and judging oneself and others became indispensable in the corporate culture of the middle decades of the twentieth century, a culture that, while often criticized as a seemingly impersonal

¹¹⁹ Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003 [1984]), 274-76.

collection of ‘organization men,’ was, in fact, built upon the dream of knowing people in their most intimate and personal details.¹²⁰

This culture of personality found its scientific justification with the growth of a distinctly American personality psychology in the 1930s, a field based fundamentally on the practice of testing. Crucial to the development of personality psychology was Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport, whose key intervention was the cataloguing of commonly used terms which he believed described all the qualities of human behavior. His goal was to group and categorize the words people use to describe so-called ‘individual differences’ in behavior, ranking them from most to least fundamental to human interaction and conduct. The development of this repository of psychological ‘traits’ allowed for the creation of much more specific and in-depth tests of variations in supposedly inherent, universal, and genotypic characteristics of individuals. In contrast to those psychologists who emphasized environment and the importance of situation and circumstance, trait theorists believed that behavioral characteristics were relatively persistent across time and could therefore be reliably tested. These dispositions could, in turn, be used to classify individuals and put them into positions where they would be more or less suited within an educational or institutional structure. During his tenure at Harvard, from 1930 to 1967, Allport would do his part to nurture the careers of two generations of the most prominent psychometricians and personality theorists of the twentieth century,

¹²⁰ William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956); C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

among them J.P. Guilford, Raymond Cattell, and Timothy Leary, as well as Donald MacKinnon and Nevitt Sanford, the eventual founders of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR).

II. Harrison Gough and the Development of Psychology and Psychiatry during World War II

During World War II, psychologists and psychiatrists mobilized in large numbers to help support the American war effort. As Ellen Herman has detailed in her book *The Romance of American Psychology* (1995), 1,700 of the 4,400 members of the American Psychological Association (APA) worked directly for the military during World War II, while thousands of other psychologists consulted for war-related government agencies. In addition, the vast majority of psychiatrists in the U.S. at the time were involved in wartime personnel screening.¹²¹ These professionals were often able to continue the work they had engaged in prior to the war: while clinicians were called upon to counsel 'shell-shocked' soldiers, experimental psychologists interested in sensation and perception might find themselves working in the area of man-machine interaction, while those who focused on motivation could be found working on national character studies or in the development of programs for morale building. In addition, psychologists interested in the issue of personality were often tasked either with the selection and screening of soldiers, or with the identification of psychopathology in those returning from the front.

¹²¹ Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 19-20.

The creator of the CPI, Harrison Gough, studied psychology as an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota, joining the Air Crew Selection Program after graduating in 1942.¹²² The head of the Personnel Research Unit to which Gough was assigned within the Selection Program was J.P. Guilford, a former protégé of Gordon Allport best known for his research into the nature and assessment of intelligence. Despite having been assigned to Guilford's unit, Gough was not thoroughly acquainted with either psychometric or personality testing. As a result, given the nature of the program, he was tasked with quickly learning how to administer such assessments as the TAT, the Rorschach, the Stanford-Binet IQ Test, and the Wechsler-Bellevue Intelligence Scale. In 1943, after a year in the Air Crew Selection Program, Gough moved to become a clinical psychologist at an 1,800-bed military hospital outside of San Antonio, Texas, an institution that was part of the Army Psychiatric Service.

The Army Psychiatric Service, organized in 1940 under a plan created by psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan, attempted to both identify those soldiers most likely to break down on the battlefield, as well as treat those who eventually did succumb to 'combat fatigue' or 'shell shock.' One of the core tasks for members of the Army Psychiatric Service was to be able to administer intelligence and personality tests and to keep abreast of any new assessments approved for use on military installations. In 1943, the newly-created Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was publicized in Army circulars

¹²² Jeff Hayes, "In Honor of Dr. Harrison Gough," *CPP*, accessed January 16, 2018, <https://www.cpp.com/en-US/Company/Dr-Harrison-Gough>; Harrison G. Gough, "Along the Way: Recollections of Some Major Contributors to Personality Assessment" (address, American Psychological Association, New York, August 28, 1987), 5.

across the country, having been approved for use only weeks after its publication.¹²³ In his new role identifying debilitated soldiers, Gough found projective personality tests inadequate, and intelligence tests unsuitable; as a result, he persuaded his superiors to order copies of the MMPI in order to start administering them to soldiers on the base.¹²⁴ Gough said that it was “apparent that there was a good correspondence between the MMPI findings and those from the interview and psychiatric examinations” and that “very often the MMPI suggested something important that was either overlooked elsewhere or that was not readily detectable in the other appraisals.”¹²⁵

Gough was evidently not the only psychologist to have a positive experience using the MMPI; by the end of 1943, the test, which was created to identify such psychological conditions as depression, hysteria, paranoia, and hypochondriasis, was the second most commonly used psychiatric test for the diagnosis of psychopathology and personality disorder, after the Rorschach test.¹²⁶ Enamored with its predictive qualities, Gough chose to return to the University of Minnesota after the war, where he studied with Starke Hathaway, one of the creators of the MMPI. While at Minnesota, from 1945 to 1949, Gough worked on a dissertation that used a modified version of the MMPI to assess the same authoritarian tendencies as the F-Scale (the ‘F’ standard for ‘Fascist’), the personality test being developed by Theodor Adorno and his colleagues at Berkeley. At the same time, however, he was also trying to identify items in the

¹²³ Gough, “Along the Way,” 8.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 7-8.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 8-9.

¹²⁶ Domino, “Review of the California Psychological Inventory,” 156.

MMPI that could help uncover either beneficial or detrimental traits in educational or work settings during a postwar era of relative peace and prosperity. Eventually, these 178 items would form the core of Gough's 480-item California Psychological Inventory (CPI).

Gough was hired as one of the first eight faculty members when IPAR opened its doors in the fall of 1949, having impressed Nevitt Sanford and Daniel Levinson, two of the founders of the Institute and co-authors of both the F-Scale and the soon-to-be-released study *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), during a visit to the University of Minnesota to give a talk about their research. In becoming one of the first members of IPAR, Gough got in on the ground floor of director Donald MacKinnon's postwar attempt to understand the personality dynamics of individual adjustment to modern industrial society.¹²⁷ This goal had grown out of MacKinnon's experience in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the wartime precursor to the CIA, where he had observed the differences between neurotic and non-neurotic soldiers and was intent on using the knowledge gained during wartime to maintain postwar American stability and progress. IPAR's original mission, for which it received its initial funding of \$100,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation, was to "study effective and happy people [and] to study what it is that makes them so."¹²⁸ The focus on non-psychiatrically disturbed individuals and their ways of adjusting to modern, American life would underlay much of IPAR's research in the second half of the twentieth century, from its

¹²⁷ Herman, "Romance of American Psychology," 46.

¹²⁸ Serraino, *The Creative Architect*, 23.

efficiency and productivity studies during the early 1950s, to the well-known creativity studies with architects, artists, and writers of the late 1950s and early 1960s, to such endeavors as the decades-long Mills Study of the lives of American women and a number of other longitudinal studies on problem-solving, imaginative writing, and thinking in school settings.¹²⁹ IPAR's overarching goal of understanding and creating happy and productive individuals dovetailed with Gough's own personal interest in measuring the "interpersonal and positive aspects of personality."¹³⁰

III. Funding and Support for Psychology and the Social Sciences in the Early Cold War

During the war, Harvard psychologist Henry Murray had spearheaded test development for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency tasked with developing espionage tactics and intelligence operations. Earlier, in 1935, Murray and his partner Christiana Morgan had developed the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) at the Harvard Psychological Clinic, an institution Murray would become director of two years later. By the end of the 1930s, the TAT would become one of the most recognized and used personality tests both in America and abroad, and was one of the signature tests used at Station S, the rural Maryland farmhouse that functioned as the assessment and training headquarters for the OSS. Many of the testing

¹²⁹ Ravenna Helson, "Institute of Personality Assessment and Research," in *Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent*, ed. Barbara Kerr (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 470.

¹³⁰ Serraino, *The Creative Architect*, 104; Edwin I. Megargee, *The California Psychological Inventory Handbook* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982), 204.

technologies developed or used at the Harvard Psychological Clinic, such as the TAT, the Rorschach, and the Bernreuter Personality Inventory—as well as various other real-world ‘situation’ tests—found their way into the military’s selection and evaluation procedures. After the war, these tests filtered into academic psychology departments across the country and into the toolkits of psychiatrists and clinical psychologists as the therapeutic professions expanded in order to treat soldiers returning home, overburdened wives and mothers, and ‘organization men’ struck with a general feeling of ennui and malaise in an otherwise prosperous and peaceful era.

The landscape of psychology in the early postwar era reflected that of the social sciences as a whole, the result being that, despite intense disagreement among scholars with different approaches, interdisciplinarity was prized above all else, especially by those holding the purse strings. Historian Jamie Cohen-Cole has stated that, during the early Cold War, “American academics, administrators, and foundation officials saw [interdisciplinary social science] as paving the road both to better theory and also the production of practical and useful results.”¹³¹ Within the discipline of psychology, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, humanistic and cognitive psychology all made legitimate claims to explaining facets of the human mind. And to the benefit of psychometricians, personality theorists, and testing companies, none of these approaches conflicted with the central goals of testing, which were to evaluate current dispositions and,

¹³¹ Jamie Cohen-Cole, *The Open Mind: Cold War Politics and the Sciences of Human Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 65.

more importantly, predict future behavior. Even behaviorists, who may have questioned the validity of the notion of persistent, inalterable personality traits, nevertheless saw testing as a way to quantify a person's present state of ability and his or her adjustment to a specific environment's reinforcement stimuli.

As historians of science Stuart Leslie and Daniel Kleinman have noted, the military-academic-industrial complex as a whole—including the discipline of psychology, which was funded in large part by the Office of Naval Research and various corporate research foundations—exploded after World War II, with California receiving more funds from the federal government than any other state.¹³² These funds went to researchers in so-called Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) in both private corporations and the expanding universities of the San Francisco Bay Area, particularly Stanford and Berkeley. Leslie describes how academics at elite universities in Northern California (and elsewhere, such as Boston's 'Route 128' technology corridor) were encouraged by foundations and government officials to turn their government-funded research into profitable ventures by setting up privately-owned businesses. The lower barriers to setting up new private enterprises—coupled with a cultural milieu that valued entrepreneurialism, individual freedom, and an ideology of limitless expansion—meant that money and resources were more likely to be plowed into an entrepreneurial operation, and much earlier on in the process, than on the East Coast. Many scientists and academics moved to

¹³² Stuart W. Leslie, *The Cold War and American Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Daniel Lee Kleinman, *Politics on the Endless Frontier: Postwar Research Policy in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 22, 146-48.

California in the 1940s and 1950s as universities expanded to meet the needs of a booming population. However, because of the ties that many researchers in the West continued to have with elite institutions back on the East Coast (such as MIT, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and the National Institutes of Health), funds that were allocated to one institution would end up circulating back-and-forth across the country, building up the West but in a different cultural and geographic ecosystem than in the East, one in which flexibility, privatization, and scalability were paramount virtues.

Harrison Gough joined IPAR, itself an FFRDC, in late summer 1949 as one of the eight original faculty members. IPAR had been established earlier that year by Donald MacKinnon and Nevitt Sanford, both of whom had received their doctorates working with Gordon Allport and Henry Murray at the Harvard Psychological Clinic. In addition, MacKinnon had been director of the OSS's Station S (the 'S' standing for 'Schools and Training') during the war, where he "helped single out those he believed would make good spies and leaders of European resistance forces."¹³³ IPAR took many of the psychological tests that had been used during the war and in the OSS and applied them to both psychological research and to the practical assessment needs of business and industry, consulting companies, and clinical psychologists. In addition, IPAR's initial prestige and ability to receive generous funding was in large part due to positioning itself as the successor institution to the work done on the

¹³³ "Donald MacKinnon, Psychology Professor," *The New York Times*, January 27, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/01/27/obituaries/donald-mackinnon-psychology-professor.html>.

authoritarian personality at Berkeley a few years prior by Sanford and his collaborators Theodor Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, and Daniel Levinson.

During the first five years of IPAR's existence, its research focused on issues of human effectiveness. This interest in studying the 'highly effective individual' followed both from MacKinnon's interest in individual adjustment to modern industrial society and from the desires of the funding sources that kept IPAR afloat.¹³⁴ The Rockefeller Foundation and the Department of Defense provided the vast majority of IPAR's funding from 1949 to 1955, while after 1955 funding was procured mainly from the Ford and Carnegie Foundations, as well as the numerous businesses and industries that commissioned proprietary studies and bought test sets from IPAR (many individual researchers also received ONR grants). As one author has recently noted, "The common denominator amongst all these organizations was the conviction that 'effectiveness' led to higher performance, which in turn meant higher profits for the companies financing the studies."¹³⁵ Taking place at the heart of the military-academic-industrial nexus that would eventually become Silicon Valley, IPAR's studies were funded in large part by the technology and aerospace companies that dotted the area. Even as IPAR began to focus more on the concept of 'creativity' in the late 1950s and 1960s, this interest grew out of a belief that creativity was the most important attribute of effective individuals in pursuits ranging from the sciences, to business, to the arts.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Serraino, *The Creative Architect*, 25.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 26.

IV. The Development of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and the Birth of Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP)

As a graduate student at Minnesota, Gough had developed the Capacity for Status (Cs) Scale, which would become one of the 18 scales to be integrated together to form the original CPI. The Cs Scale had been created out of a number of items found on the MMPI; indeed, as previously noted, 178 of the CPI's eventual 480 items were recycled from the MMPI. The Cs Scale was supposed to determine which individuals would be recognized as leaders by others and who would in turn be able to provide charismatic direction and guidance for large groups of individuals. The 32 items that made up the Cs Scale were supposed to measure a person's self-confidence, capacity for independent behavior, and poise in stressful situations.¹³⁷ This interest in leadership, originally reinforced by the need for top-down discipline in military settings, burgeoned in business as corporations became increasingly more complex, requiring different types and levels of command and control at an increasing number of rungs along the corporate ladder.

Gough spent much of his early career at Berkeley focused on developing the CPI as a so-called 'MMPI for sane people.' By 1951, Gough had completed 15 of the 18 scales of the CPI, funded in large part by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health and the Office of Naval Research. As noted earlier, the 1950s were a heady time for the psychological profession: clinical psychology was expanding greatly to meet the needs of veterans as well as the increased demand

¹³⁷ Harrison G. Gough, *An Interpreter's Syllabus for the California Psychological Inventory* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1968), 7.

from housewives and businessmen for therapy during the ‘age of anxiety’ of the early Cold War.¹³⁸ Additionally, many academic psychologists had their wartime contracts extended after 1945 when the Office of Naval Research came into being, “employ[ing] psychologists in areas of personnel and training (test design and measurement)” as well as in areas of group dynamics, human factors engineering, and physiological psychology.¹³⁹ Not only did the U.S. government fund a large percentage of the psychological research carried out in the early postwar era, but California in particular was both an outsized recipient of funds and a strong supporter of the psy-disciplines and the technologies that accompanied their growth. California’s growth post-World War II, coupled with the expansion of the University of California system and the flourishing aerospace, defense, and electronics industries, meant that scientific assessments used for hiring, selection, and promotion were in high demand.¹⁴⁰

In the early 1950s, Jack Black, founder and director of Stanford’s on-campus Counseling and Testing Center, started a private consulting firm called Consulting Psychologists Associated. Black used psychometric and personality tests—chiefly the Strong Vocational Interest Blank and the TAT—with his clients, almost all of which were the technology and electronics companies scattered around the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1955, shortly before the completion of the CPI, Gough contacted Black, also a former graduate student at the University of

¹³⁸ Andrea Tone, *The Age of Anxiety: A History of America’s Turbulent Affair with Tranquilizers* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Jessica Grogan, *Encountering America*; Jessica Wang, *American Science in an Age of Anxiety: Scientists, Anticommunism, and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

¹³⁹ Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 129.

¹⁴⁰ Megargee, *The California Psychological Inventory Handbook*, 161.

Minnesota, to ask him which company he thought should publish the CPI. After perusing the test, Black convinced Gough that, instead of publishing the CPI through an already existing company such as the Psychological Corporation or the Educational Testing Service, they should collaborate to start a new company to publish and distribute the CPI assessment. By the end of 1956, their new company, Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP), had been established in Palo Alto, its sole product being the CPI.

The first official version of the CPI was published in late 1956. It was supposed to measure 18 dimensions of personality such as Dominance (Do), Self-control (Sc), and Psychological flexibility (Fx), on the basis of 480 true-false statements. Intended for use with ‘normal’ populations, the bulk of the items in the CPI were tested on 5000 high school and college students in and around the Berkeley area. Shortly after its introduction, the CPI began to be used in educational settings (such as at Stanford’s Counseling and Testing Center), in the creativity studies that would soon begin at IPAR, and with managers and executives at the companies for which Black consulted. Although Gough had originally developed the CPI to be used in cross-cultural personality research—believing that he had identified 18 universal dimensions of personality—almost immediately the test became restricted to the “assessment of behavior patterns relevant to functioning in educational and industrial settings.”¹⁴¹

Four months after the creation of CPP, Black and Gough received a contract to publish all of Stanford Psychology Press’s psychological assessments—

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 204.

including the popular Strong Vocational Interest Blank—in perpetuity. CPP’s first clients were two companies that had already given funds to IPAR and were staples of the Bay Area corporate scene: technology company Hewlett-Packard and defense company Lockheed. As one psychologist has noted, the CPI was introduced in the right place and at the right time: “the CPI had fertile soil in which to grow” as California was “home to many of the chief aerospace and electronics industries” and experienced “Unprecedented population growth following World War II [which] forced rapid expansion of the educational system at all levels.”¹⁴² The military-industrial complex, as President Eisenhower famously dubbed it in his farewell address to the nation in 1961, along with the expanding higher education system, were the most enthusiastic supporters of personality assessment in the postwar era.

IPAR and CPP formed a symbiotic relationship within the larger ecosystem of Silicon Valley. Government and foundation monies flowed from cities like Washington, D.C. and New York to IPAR for psychological research and test development, after which these tests would then be marketed and sold by CPP to the same government agencies and corporations that had funded IPAR’s research. The government and corporations, flush with money during the prosperous era of organizational expansion during the 1950s and 1960s, were willing to fund IPAR’s research and buy assessments from CPP because they saw themselves as, on the one hand, supporting America’s preeminent scientific establishment, and on the other, receiving the benefits of individual productivity

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 161.

and efficiency that the psychological sciences could provide. Psychological testing provided an air of objectivity for these institutions in their hiring and promotion practices, even as the studies from which the tests emerged were specifically commissioned by these companies to identify and develop certain predetermined types of individuals.

From CPP's birth in 1956 until the mid-1980s, all of the company's executives were members of IPAR, and their research most often focused on the psychology of corporations and managerialism. Their contacts within both government and industry helped disperse IPAR's research and CPP's instruments across the institutional spectrum, from schools to companies to the government and military. The result was that much of what was distinct about Northern California's psychological culture permeated into the American organizational landscape writ large during the 1960s and 1970s. This went hand in hand with the dissemination of countercultural ideas within the wider culture through popular media outlets that sold San Francisco and its environs as a mecca for youth culture and new ways of living freely in an increasingly organized society. For those who were asked to take them, personality tests often looked like tools for the fostering individuality in a society that increasingly tried to tamp it down; however, the facts of their creation and distribution show how they often helped collapse the distinction between the individual and the group in such a way that working towards organizational goals was often held up as the surest path to individual development and self-realization.

V. The Career Assessment Center and the Proliferation of Personality Testing in Corporate America

In the mid-1950s, a new type of institution also came into being, one that played an outsized role in expanding and normalizing the use of personality and psychometric assessments in American business. The Corporate Assessment Center, first established at Michigan Bell in 1956 as part of a long-term study of the lives of managers and executives, was modeled after Henry Murray's assessment regimes at the Harvard Psychological Clinic and Station S. Although the original Corporate Assessment Center used proprietary instruments in the evaluation of middle managers and executives, these assessments were modeled after ones used by the OSS and focused on a number of key performance factors, especially those related to "oral communications" and "interpersonal influence (variously labeled as 'leadership,' 'impact,' [and] 'persuasiveness')." ¹⁴³ The virtue of the assessment method, as asserted by those who worked at Station S and in Corporate Assessment Centers, was its ability to "tap individual differences in [such] core abilities" as to "influence, communicate, and administer tasks" effectively to others. ¹⁴⁴ In other words, the personality tests that comprised the assessment method—derived from military applications but used most extensively in human resources management—helped to identify those individuals who possessed the qualities most important to organizational growth: leadership, motivation, and communication skills.

¹⁴³ Thomas E. Standing, "Assessment and Management Selection," in *Applying the Assessment Center Method*, eds. Joseph L. Moses and William C. Byham (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), 192.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

That said, the Corporate Assessment Center was not used merely to obtain accurate descriptions of current employees and teams. Instead, it was often used in an effort to *predict, change, and control* the future behavior of individuals and groups; it was this feature that made it particularly appealing to hiring managers, corporate consultants, and those in leadership and talent development who wanted to be able to know that those they hired would be productive for years to come. The CPI itself was built from the outset to be a predictive device: Gough's interest in psychological testing was originally piqued by the forecasting abilities of the MMPI, a test that seemed able to identify which soldiers and veterans would need extensive therapeutic counseling and which would not. As noted earlier, Gough's experience during the war taught him that tests could be used to "forecast complex and important outcomes" that were not obvious using other methods, such as in interviews or through clinical observation.¹⁴⁵ The implication was that tests had the ability to get at some ingrained quality through a structured form of self-revelation, one that had been created by experts to understand and predict individual behavior in an organizational context and of which the test-taker would be largely unaware. As a result, a person 'revealed' a select part of him or herself to the psychologist, manager, or human resources officer, which they would then claim represented a significant part of that person's identity, personality, or worldview, despite the fact that the tests had been engineered to uncover only a limited number of qualities relevant to work

¹⁴⁵ Christina Maslach and Sheldon Zedeck, "Obituary: Harrison Gough," *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist* 52, no. 2 (October 2014): 175.

within large, hierarchical organizations. That a large percentage of people continue to use personality tests such as the CPI to understand themselves at a fundamental level points to the prevalence of the ‘managerial mode of control’ that scholars such as Fred Turner have argued we both live under and replenish through our ways of understanding and surveilling ourselves.

When one tries to predict talent or ability as early as possible in the hiring process—which is, of course, the goal—it is more likely that sorting will be based on qualities such as credentials, class, status, or connections, rather than on a person’s actual acquisition of on-the-job skills or knowledge. The result is that those ‘individual differences’ that are uncovered through testing, whatever they may be, are less the result of actual differences in inborn personality than in the habits of behavior that have been acquired through one’s sociocultural environment and which are then selected for by those executives and officials who have also been ‘disciplined’ to value similar styles of behavior and thought. As Jill Morawski and Kenneth Gergen have both argued, one of the oft-unacknowledged ways in which psychological tests that are used to screen and hire employees are exclusionary—even producing forms of discrimination that managers and executives would consider counterproductive were they aware—is that the norms for these tests are almost always based on small, homogeneous populations. If the norms for the personality types that correspond to charismatic leadership, communication, and motivation are based on small populations that are relatively uniform in gender, age, geographic location, or any of a number of key attributes (such as, e.g., a group of 18-to-22 year olds from Northern

California in the early 1950s), it is much more likely that dissimilar populations will be disadvantaged without reason.¹⁴⁶ Thus the irony of corporate personality tests: although they have often been introduced and justified as objective tools that do away with more patently unfair or inefficient methods that capitalize on a person's connections or status, the same people will often be hired because the tests used them as the norm for exemplary corporate behavior. As Kurt Danziger aptly notes, "The categories with which the new psychology of personality operated were always highly dependent on a particular social context...There are all kinds of culturally sanctioned preconceptions about who is likely to succeed in what institutions...the main social function of psychologic procedures will be the affirmation of the particular cultural values that have been built into them."¹⁴⁷

By the late 1960s, the CPI had been introduced into dozens of Corporate Assessment Centers, such as those at J.C. Penney, Sears, IBM, Mobil, and General Electric. Alongside the TAT, the Myers-Briggs, and the Strong Vocational Interest Blank, the CPI was mainly used to assess potential middle managers, those individuals who represented the archetypal 'company man' who was expected to grow and change (i.e., adjust) to conform to the wants and needs of the corporation and to his superiors, while at the same time seeing the "opportunity for self-expression" as his most valuable asset.¹⁴⁸ Managing people

¹⁴⁶ Mitchell G. Ash, "Introduction: Psychological Thought and Practice—Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives," in *Psychology's Territories: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives from Different Disciplines*, eds. Mitchell G. Ash and Thomas Sturm (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007), 10-11, 20-21.

¹⁴⁷ Kurt Danziger, *Constructing the Subject: Historical Origins of Psychological Research* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 161, 172-73.

¹⁴⁸ Douglas W. Bray, Richard J. Campbell, and Donald L. Grant, *Formative Years in Business: A Long-Term AT&T Study of Managerial Lives* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 15.

through their expectation that work could aid in their quest for self-determination or self-realization was the hallmark of the postwar corporation, although this worker ‘freedom’ was often based on the ability of the individual to evince a personality or identity that had been revealed to them by the company, with very specific tasks or duties in mind. The success of the Corporate Assessment Center method, undergirded by the massive amounts of data that it generated, ensured that the middle manager (most often white, male, and middle or upper-middle class) remained the normative research subject for applied personality psychology in the postwar era. Even as women and minorities increasingly took on managerial and executive roles in the 1970s and 1980s, the data sets on white, male middle managers from the 1950s and 1960s created the norms by which all subsequent employees would be measured and evaluated.

By the early 1970s, most Career Assessment Centers had transformed into so-called Early Identification Programs, designed to “prepare as rapidly as possible those who show good potential to assume a management assignment and thus, hopefully, reduce turnover of employees who show promise.”¹⁴⁹ MacKinnon said that the goal was “not to screen people out but rather to identify and develop employees who seem to have managerial potential.”¹⁵⁰ The fact, of course, is that screening and selection are two sides of the same coin: as there are only a limited number of managerial and executive positions in any organization, to develop some people implies a lack of employment or training for others.

¹⁴⁹ Donald W. MacKinnon, “The Role of Assessment Centers in Training and Development” (lecture, American Society for Training and Development, Greensboro, NC, June 4, 1974), 14.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Those who demonstrate potential through tests and assessments will be the ones to advance, at the expense of those who, for whatever reason, do not match the norms of leadership, communication, motivation, and self-realization that the tests are built around. However, by arguing (perhaps disingenuously) that tests are not used to screen people out but are instead used to identify those who will be expected to stay with the company long-term, MacKinnon and others advanced a standard view of the corporation as a type of family—an idea that proved increasingly popular in the 1970s and 1980s—even as more people than ever were being downsized or denied promotions while many others experienced stagnant incomes.¹⁵¹

It is also clear that the increased emphasis on identifying and developing employee ‘potential’ early on was partially an attempt to maintain corporate stability in the face of two broader socioeconomic trends during the 1970s: (1) an increasingly diverse workforce, both in terms of gender and race, and (2) the ascendance of neoliberal governance and the move towards deregulation and free-market principles on a global stage. Corporations looked to manage the rapid changes caused by demographic shifts and new post-Keynesian ideologies of political economy that stressed worker (and capital) freedom, flexibility, and individuality by hiring only those who fit the characterological mode of those already successful in the corporate environment. That companies were interested

¹⁵¹ For more on the importance of the concept of ‘family’ in the 1970s and 1980s, see Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and Deborah Weinstein, *The Pathological Family: Postwar America and the Rise of Family Therapy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

in mitigating the upheaval caused by these changes should not obscure the fact that the changes in fact produced increasingly large profits for American firms and executives through both (1) the depressive effect of an expanded labor market on wages and compensation, and (2) the expansion of global markets for American goods and services. That a not inconsequential number of women and minorities shared the personality types and traits that corresponded to those preferred by human resources departments and talent development staff allowed both test developers and the corporations that used these instruments to deflect accusations of bias in their hiring and promotion practices, despite the fact that these valued managerial attributes were explicitly based on the archetype of the upper-middle class white male. Thus, while the corporation looked more diverse in one sense, this diversity obscured a homogeneity in personality and behavior that the corporation was dedicated to maintaining—and which workers were forced to conform to in order to find work or be promoted.

VI. Abraham Maslow and Humanistic Management Theory in California and Beyond

Back in 1943, Abraham Maslow published what could be considered the founding document of the humanistic psychology movement, his piece “A Theory of Human Motivation.” It was in this paper that he elucidated his ‘hierarchy of needs’ and, drawing on the work of German neurologist Kurt Goldstein, posited that self-actualization—the realization of one’s highest potential—was the ultimate goal of every human being. This paper, alongside the book length exposition that followed a decade later, his 1954 work *Motivation and*

Psychology, proclaimed humanistic psychology as the ‘third force’ in American psychology, alongside the stalwart forces of psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Although humanistic psychology was, from the start, a diverse movement of theorists and practitioners (including, e.g., Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May) who took the goals of self-realization and self-actualization down a number of different paths, Maslow very early on marketed his vision of humanistic psychology to the business world, particularly to executives and management theorists interested in the possibility that employee fulfillment at work could be a stimulus to corporate efficiency and, thus, higher profits.

Whereas other well-known luminaries of the humanistic psychology movement such as Carl Rogers and Rollo May were focused, respectively, on the clinical and societal applications of humanistic principles in an attempt to foster creativity, authenticity, and growth in individuals, Maslow and his close colleagues in humanistic management found themselves focused on “the use of group processes to promote self-awareness and self-development in workers—thereby generating human capital that would in turn serve as a corporate asset.”¹⁵² These group processes, such as communications training, leadership seminars, group therapy and feedback, as well as group personality testing, found their most significant reception in the milieu of California in the 1950s and 1960s where psychologists interested in the humanistic movement found themselves housed both in psychological research institutes (such as IPAR) and in business schools at Berkeley, Stanford, and UCLA, among others. Drawing on ideas from

¹⁵² Grogan, *Encountering America*, 151.

heterodox industrial psychologists on the East Coast such as MIT's Douglas McGregor, management theorists such as Fred Massarik, James Clark, and Bob Tannenbaum proposed that since work was the single place where the majority of people spent most of their waking time, it should be a place where people are encouraged to self-actualize.¹⁵³ As with McGregor, the goal for Maslow, Massarik, and others was to find "that degree of integration in which the individual can achieve his goals *best* by directing his efforts toward the success of the organization."¹⁵⁴

The support that Abraham Maslow and humanistic psychology received from businesspeople and management theorists in California was widespread. Maslow was hired by Andrew Kay, the owner and chief executive of electric instruments company Non-Linear Systems and the inventor of the digital voltmeter, to provide recommendations for how to institute humanistic principles throughout the company. It was on the basis of this experience that Maslow wrote *Eupsychian Management* (1965), his main work on industrial psychology in which he argued that companies should be organized such that, "highly evolved individuals [can] assimilate their work into the identity, into the self" such that "work actually becomes part of the self, part of the individual's definition of himself."¹⁵⁵ Historian Jessica Grogan notes that, "Kay's enthusiasm for Maslow proved to be evidence of more than just a personal affinity. Almost

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006 [1960]), 75.

¹⁵⁵ Abraham H. Maslow, *Eupsychian Management* (New York: Richard D. Irwin, 1965), 1; Dallas Cullen, "Maslow, Monkeys and Motivation Theory," *Organization* 4, no. 3 (August 1997): 366.

everywhere Maslow went in the world of California business and management theory, he encountered enthusiasm.”¹⁵⁶

The fact that many of Maslow’s contacts and boosters were in California should not come as a surprise: California’s “physical and spiritual distance from the ‘Freud-bound’ approaches of the East Coast and Midwest made it home to an astonishing array of self-growth practices making up the ‘human potential movement’ and inspired largely by humanistic psychology.”¹⁵⁷ As Nadine Weidman shows in her work, however, there was a “continuous circulation and exchange of humanistic psychological ideas, practices, and practitioners between the counterculture and what we might call the ‘Establishment’” that was facilitated by people like Maslow, Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls, and Timothy Leary, all of whom spent significant amounts of time in California’s regional humanistic subculture, but also moved in and out of the mainstream through their public appearances, popular articles, and promotion of humanistic organizational practices.¹⁵⁸ For Maslow, this interest in the management of people and his experience as a consultant for a number of corporations in the 1960s eventually convinced him that self-actualizers might be biologically and genetically superior to others, and that there should be ‘freedom-maximizing’ governing structures for these highly evolved individuals, and more ‘authoritarian’ systems for those at

¹⁵⁶ Grogan, *Encountering America*, 151.

¹⁵⁷ Nadine Weidman, “Between the Counterculture and the Corporation: Abraham Maslow and Humanistic Psychology in the 1960s,” in *Groovy Science: Knowledge, Innovation, and American Counterculture*, eds. David Kaiser and W. Patrick McCray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 122.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

the bottom of the motivational hierarchy.¹⁵⁹ In this sense, Maslow's ideas resembled, influenced, and integrated with the ideas of other organizational psychologists during the 1960s and 1970s (such as Douglas McGregor and David McClelland) whose work on organizational behavior led them to posit that efficiency, productivity, and profits would be achieved by offering high-level employees a type of freedom that could not be given to those at the bottom of the corporate ladder.

Although those who called themselves 'humanistic management theorists' were by no means the majority in business schools in the 1960s—nor are they the majority today—their ideas seeped into the mainstream of business thinking relatively seamlessly. By the mid-1960s, orthodox management theorists such as Rensis Likert, Chris Argyris, and Frederick Herzberg promoted 'participative' ideas about how to convince workers to see their fortunes as aligned with those of their company; management was to be seen not as an imposition but instead as a type of therapeutic relationship in which both manager and employee could become more fulfilled, "developing [themselves] via the community, the team, the group, the organization."¹⁶⁰ The flood of new people into the workplace in the late 1960s and 1970s convinced many theorists and executives of the importance of these types of ideas. For example, Robert Townsend, acolyte of Douglas McGregor and former CEO of Avis Rent a Car, gave participative management ideas nationwide appeal with the publication of his bestselling 1970 book *Up the*

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 131.

¹⁶⁰ Abraham H. Maslow, *The Maslow Business Reader*, ed. Deborah C. Stephens (New York: Wiley, 2000), 7; Grogan, *Encountering America*, 151.

Organization in which he was “adamant that leaders can’t motivate anyone—they can only create the environment where individuals motivate themselves.”¹⁶¹

The notion that motivation is something that the leader infuses into an environment is the flip side of the notion that workers must develop themselves or perish. Conflating leadership with the ability to stimulate self-motivation in one’s employees, Townsend’s work became popular in the 1970s as a widespread interest in self-development melded with the perennial goal of employee-employer integration in American business. It is not coincidental that participative management ideas entered the mainstream at the same time that the use of personality tests and other psychometric assessments boomed in corporate human resources after two decades of relative stagnancy.¹⁶² Influenced by the countercultural emphasis on self-understanding, many of the new workers who entered into business in the late 1960s and 1970s saw the use of personality tests and assessments as a sign of the organization’s dedication to take its employees’ individuality into account, and not what an earlier generation of social critics had argued were efforts to predict and control workers’ personalities for the benefit of the executives and the prerogatives of management.

One reason for the success of humanistic psychology and its affiliated management practices is that they came to prominence during an era in which “conceptions of human nature that had been thick with context, social

¹⁶¹ Bob Davids, “How Robert Townsend Talked Me Out of Getting an MBA,” in Robert Townsend, *Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2007 [1970]), xvii.

¹⁶² William C. Byham, “Application of the Assessment Center Method,” in *Applying the Assessment Center Method*, eds. Joseph L. Moses and William C. Byham (New York: Pergamon, 1977) 33-34, 37.

circumstance, institutions, and history gave way to conceptions of human nature that stressed choice, agency, performance, and desire” and at a time when “Selves became more flexible and less unitary.”¹⁶³ Humanistic psychology was not necessarily the catalyst for this change—indeed, this ideology emerged hand-in-hand with massive postwar social, cultural, and economic shifts during the late 1950s and 1960s that worked to individualize and disaggregate the populace from once strong bonds of family, community, and long-term employment with one firm or organization. But humanistic psychology suffused into the cultural landscape—through media, therapy, and self-help technologies—in such a way that what was big in California became big everywhere, and ideas about self-actualization, self-development, and personal liberation transitioned from regional obsession into national pastime.

VII. Personality Tests in Total Institutions in the Countercultural and Post-Countercultural 1970s

The CPI proved particularly popular during the resurgence of personality testing in large corporations during the 1970s. This was in large part due to the influx of college-educated women (and minorities) who needed to be slotted into positions in the existing corporate environment during a years-long economic downturn, as social upheaval made executives all the more interested in repackaging the status quo as something that would appeal to a new generation. As Beth Bailey notes, “the economic crisis of the 1970s—along with better job opportunities for women—was a powerful catalyst for change. In 1970, 30

¹⁶³ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), 3, 9.

percent of women with children under six years of age held paid jobs. That total jumped to 43 percent in 1976 and then to 50 percent in 1985.”¹⁶⁴ To understand and motivate this new workforce, many of whom had countercultural leanings, the CPI and other personality tests proved quite suitable: assessments that were used to try to understand people on an individual level, and that could be used to match an individual with a seemingly tailor-made position, appealed to the widespread distrust of large-scale hierarchies and belief in creative nonconformity that were the deeply-held values of the ‘generation of ’68.’¹⁶⁵ These assessments and the management procedures that followed from them gave many employees the feeling of freedom and self-determination at work, even as they in fact narrowed their paths of development to those already well-traveled within corporate America.¹⁶⁶

This revamped personality testing movement also aligned in the 1970s with the birth of the not-yet-named positive psychology movement, heralded in by psychiatrist Aaron Beck and psychologist Martin Seligman, both at the University of Pennsylvania. Although these two movements are not often connected by historians, their roots are in fact deeply intertwined: both have their origins in the early postwar attempt to understand how and why some soldiers and veterans proved extremely resilient under the harshest of conditions, while

¹⁶⁴ Beth Bailey, “She ‘Can Bring Home the Bacon:’ Negotiating Gender in the 1970s,” in *America in the Seventies*, eds. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 109.

¹⁶⁵ Bethany E. Moreton, “Make Payroll, Not War: Business Culture as Youth Culture,” in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, eds. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 67.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

others suffered deep and lasting mental trauma. At IPAR, Gough, MacKinnon, Barron, and much of the rest of the staff took this interest in resilience (which they considered a type of ‘efficiency’) and applied it to their studies of scientists, businessmen, and artists, analogizing the stress and strain of such endeavors in the 1950s and 1960s to those experienced by men on the battlefield in the 1940s. Funded by government and military grants, and by war contractors-cum-electronics and aerospace corporations, IPAR’s personality studies reimagined the ‘organization man’ as a ‘corporate soldier,’ someone who worked for the benefit of the group by cultivating self-discipline and self-development.

In this way, personality testing exceeded the bounds of the workplace and became a hallmark technology of the total institution in the postwar world. As Donald MacKinnon notes, with reference to the assessments and recommendations of the Career Assessment Center, “the candidate with help from his manager constructs a planned program for self-development which typically includes things to be accomplished in the office, in outside activities, and in formal and informal education.”¹⁶⁷ It was the management of a person’s self-reflection and self-investment in all aspects of life, born of the postwar interest in soldier resilience and sustained by a concern for business productivity, that led to the ‘entrepreneurialization’ of the American workforce, encouraging even those in low-level positions in massive corporations to see themselves as entrepreneurs, constantly investing in themselves and their development in order to become better workers and, at the same time, more developed individuals.

¹⁶⁷ MacKinnon, *The Role of Assessment Centers*, 17.

This type of self-surveillance often began during the hiring process, when a battery of personality assessments would be distributed to candidates to help them understand who they were, how they could improve, and where they would fit within a group or organization. This amounts to saying that personality, at least since the 1950s, has been a corporate concept that has come to dominate many people's lives and worldviews, to such an extent that what is often considered to be self-improvement and self-actualization has in fact been developed with organizational and group productivity in mind.

A number of critics noted how personality tests were being used in other total institutions not merely (or even principally) to understand people but to surveil and develop the populace. In 1979, critic Susan Vogel published an article in which she criticized Gough's suggestion that personality questionnaires be given to all first graders in the United States, with the intention of developing children from their earliest moments in order to take advantage of their relative talents and interests. She characterized Gough's endeavor as an attempt to "pin-point at age seven, potential troublemakers, future talented specialists. Specialized training and surveillance could then be instituted from the earliest years."¹⁶⁸ The utilitarian aspect of this proposal demonstrates that personality testing was not, in the main, about reflection and development for the benefit of the individual, but instead for the group, institution, or organization of which the individual was a part. Personality testing may have seemed like a corrective for

¹⁶⁸ Susan Kaiser Vogel, "What Did This Money Buy?," in *The Intelligence Agents*, ed. Timothy Leary (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon Publications, 1979), 125.

the 'adjustment' ideology of the early postwar years, but it instead used the focus on individual development in order to benefit the organization, those who developed the assessments, and those who capitalized on the monitoring and management techniques that followed.

The interest in and use of personality tests by corporations in the 1970s was in part fueled by their connection to countercultural ideas, specifically the resurgence of interest in Carl Jung and his ideas about the collective unconscious and the universal human archetypes that supposedly emerged from this wellspring. Businesses capitalized on an interest in New Age ideas to convince workers that they were not organized around authoritarian principles and had no interest in doing away with their workers' individuality, but were interested in letting people tap into the non-rational, less 'scientific,' more 'emotional' parts of themselves. Concerns about the prevalence of hegemonic, inhuman systems led many educated, middle and upper-middle class Americans in the 1970s to turn towards ideologies, theories, and technologies of personal liberation. Much like the 1890s and the 1920s, the 1970s was an era of appreciation of Eastern ideas, such as yoga and meditation, as well as mystical or mythic ideas that expressly tapped into non-rational sentiment. However, unlike either the 1890s or 1920s, these ideas became widely appropriated by large businesses (as opposed to smaller esoteric publishers, advertisers, or mystics) in an attempt to staunch unrest and backlash against corporations, capitalism, and work itself.

VIII. The Growth of the CPI and CPP in the 1980s and 1990s

In light of the success of the Myers-Briggs in the 1970s and 1980s (a test that CPP also began to publish at this time), Harrison Gough and a number of other CPI experts began to remodel the test to give results that looked similar to the MBTI. Thus, instead of giving feedback that measured a person on twenty or more disparate personality traits, these indices were consolidated into a four-fold system of personality types labeled Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta. Although this was fewer than the 16 types that could be sussed out with the Myers-Briggs, the move from 'traits' to 'types' allowed test-takers to be labeled in a way that was not possible previously, and to be given a readymade path for improvement that would have been much harder to glean from the original system. On top of this four-fold system of personality types introduced in the 1987 revision of the CPI, a scale from 1 to 7 was also included to indicate whether a person had 'actualized' or 'realized' their personality type most fully. The goal for the test-taker would be to achieve a 7, indicating that he or she had become the best version of his or her type. Of course, the interpretation of one's CPI results was always done with the help of a staff psychologist or human resources professional, a person who was certified by CPP and could tell that person what he or she needed to do to be not only the best type of employee, but also the most developed type of individual outside of the workplace.

Gough labeled the four CPI personality types 'lifestyles,' emphasizing that no type was better than the others, but also that they were not merely limited to work but could explain behavior in all aspects of a person's life (or, indeed, that one's lifestyle and workstyle were one inextricably linked). Management

consultants Pierre Meyer and Sandra Davis wrote in the official CPI Applications Guide (1992) that “One of the most potent uses of CPI results is to help individuals look at their own strengths and limitations...Persons who understand themselves and who recognize the need for change are most likely to effectively modify attitudes and behaviors” and that “The psychologist can use the CPI results to help educate the individual and outline ways in which that person can work differently.”¹⁶⁹ They described the four lifestyles this way: Alphas were externally oriented and rule-abiding, assertive and dominant in leadership style; Betas are reserved, introspective, and rule-abiding, goal-focused and task-oriented; Gammas are externally oriented but challenge rules and procedures, are assertive, independent, and self-assured; and Deltas are reserved and private but constantly challenge mores and rules.¹⁷⁰ These styles were identified on the basis of a factor analysis of the original CPI which had distilled the 21 scales into just 2 primary continuums of human behavior: introversion—extraversion and individualism—communalism. Depending on where one landed on each of these 2 continua, one would be given a type label and recommendations for how to become the best version of that type. In this way, individual behavior was labeled and managed for the benefit of the organization, and was couched within a rhetoric of inclusion such that it was said to not matter who one was, so long as one strived to develop oneself to the best of one’s abilities.

¹⁶⁹ Pierre Meyer and Sandra Davis, *The California Psychological Inventory: An Essential Tool for Individual, Group, and Organizational Development* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1992), 87.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 95-103.

During the 1980s, Gough created five new scales for the CPI, each one specifically aimed toward industrial and corporate settings, fitting the way in which the CPI was predominantly used. These five scales were ‘Managerial potential,’ ‘Work orientation,’ ‘Leadership,’ ‘Creativity,’ and ‘Social maturity.’ The first three scales were created to implement the research that a number of management theorists had done in the 1970s, most notably Abraham Zaleznik and Warren Bennis, who had tried to distinguish between ‘leaders’ and ‘managers,’ believing that the organizational “psychologist must be able to distinguish between those individuals who transform organizations and those who offer more organized and transactional management.”¹⁷¹ Those who received an Alpha label were thus groomed for top leadership, whereas those who received a Beta label were given work that would not lead to the top of the corporate ladder. Although the CPI was created as a supposedly universal personality test, its use from the 1980s on was restricted almost entirely to business, and the new scales made it clear that it was being marketed as a corporate development tool. It might reasonably be said, therefore, that it was during the 1980s that personality *explicitly* became a corporate concept as the CPI and other tests linked a person’s lifestyle and psyche with one’s abilities at work.

The CPI Applications Guide (1992), which came out five years after the Alpha-Delta revision, noted that “CPI results can also provide rich information about managerial characteristics and tendencies—for both executives and

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 39-40.

managers.”¹⁷² Demonstrating how the business world had been organized into ‘leaders’ and ‘followers,’ Meyer and Davis said that CPI results “can be applied to issues of interpersonal effectiveness, achievement drive, organizational orientation, social responsibility, work style, and other personal characteristics. They can address leader and follower behaviors in a manner that can assist an individual or a team to better themselves and to better use strengths and counteract limitations.”¹⁷³ The obvious distinction between Alphas and Betas was that Alphas were given the freedom to move the company in the directions that they chose, while Betas were given positions where they had to do what the leaders asked of them. This distinction is quite similar to one made by David McClelland in his use of the TAT (which will be explained in Chapter 3), in which the leader was identified by a high need for power, whereas the good manager was said to have a high need for achievement.

The main function of the CPI was to get corporate employees to accept a certain path of development that corresponded to their supposed personality type and to the wants and needs of the corporate leadership. Personality tests were used to create predictable employees, predictability being the foundation upon which long-term growth was built. Although these tests were sold as exercises that could help employees understand themselves, it may be more accurate to say that these tests were used, first and foremost, to give human resources managers and executives the ability to understand and control their workforce. CPP’s

¹⁷² Ibid, 39.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 3.

website advertises their 4-day, \$2095 CPI certification program to managers, career counselors, and organizational development specialists to help them “gain insight into individuals’ interpersonal style, values, and motivation—as well as into strengths and blind spots in their leadership approach.”¹⁷⁴ Thus, the test—and the sociotechnical system of which it is a part—is not about self-development per se, but about self-development in the sense that it is a conduit for other-development and group development.

In the 1990s, the CPI started to be administered electronically, using computer software created by IPAR and CPP and marketed by new testing companies, the vast majority of which were based in Silicon Valley. These computer platforms incorporated many tests, including both the Myers-Briggs and a new type of assessment, 360 Analysis, that gave people feedback based on other employees’ impressions of them. The introduction of 360 Analysis made explicit the reinvigoration of the ‘organization man’ ethos of the 1950s, where employees were encouraged to adjust themselves to be pleasing to the group, even though it was marketed as an attempt to develop the personality and abilities of the individual. Like 360 Analysis, the CPI and other corporate personality tests attempt to convince the test-taker that by changing his or her pattern of behavior and interactions at work, he or she can change and unlock his or her unique potential. As a result, the tracking of these test scores in one’s

¹⁷⁴ “MBTI Certification,” Certification and Training, CPP, accessed February 5, 2018, <https://www.cpp.com/en-US/Products-and-Services/Certification-and-Training/MBTI-Certification>.

personnel file becomes a potent form of soft authoritarianism (which, in this case, is merely self-manipulation by another name).

IX. Conclusion

The CPI became popular in the 1960s and 1970s because its focus on creativity, flexibility, and communication fit with a new mode of thinking in which individuality and self-directed self-change overshadowed the model of the ‘organization man’ that had been dominant (although perhaps only superficially so) since the 1940s. However, as Thomas Frank describes in his book *The Conquest of Cool*, it is not in fact the case that the focus on the individual and the hegemony of the corporation were at odds; instead, it would be more accurate to say that corporations and the military-academic-industrial complex used the critique of organizations and the increasing interest in the self to blunt dissent and bring potential critics of business and industry into the fold. Personality tests such as the CPI—as well as the therapeutic and developmental procedures that were put in place to follow up on their results—gave employees a sense of investment in their own development, a type of development that conflated personal goals with those of the larger group. This is why the metrics of the test often centered around the three particular industrial concepts considered integral to postwar white-collar business: leadership, motivation, and communication.

One of the central assumptions of psychology in general, and personality testing in particular, has been that mental categories can be treated in a similar manner to the physical properties of the natural world. As Kurt Danziger has remarked, in reference to the psychological tests of the early 20th century, “The

question of how terms like ‘ascendance’ or ‘dependence’ functioned in the language games characterizing certain social relationships was not the kind of question that motivated these investigative practices. Instead...[they] were treated as unambiguous properties of the natural world that were to be investigated much as a nineteenth-century physicist might have investigated electrical resistance.”¹⁷⁵ For Gough and the human resources managers and applied psychologists who used the CPI, social context was often stripped from categories such as motivation, leadership, communication, self-control, flexibility, etc., as if these were properties solely of the individual and not of continuous interaction between person, group, situation, and institution. While certain individuals at IPAR (such as Frank Barron) noted that their research often just described the optimal psychology of a middle-aged, upper-middle-class, white male professor in the summer months on the California coast (i.e., themselves), most others saw personality psychology as describing human psychology writ large and not perhaps a very particular type of norm.¹⁷⁶ The contingency of these tests was easy to ignore when the situations in which these technologies were used were very often the same, that is, in the large corporations that were increasingly important to the functioning of American society in the second half of the twentieth century.

Researchers at IPAR had been obsessed with the concept of effectiveness from the 1950s through the 1970s; although this “distinctive emphasis came

¹⁷⁵ Danziger, *Constructing the Subject*, 161.

¹⁷⁶ Frank Barron, “IPAR in the Beginning,” 5, n.d., Folder MAM: MBTI, Archives of the Institute of Personality and Social Research, University of California, Berkeley, Richmond, California.

through MacKinnon himself and his lifelong engagement with the concept of ‘effectiveness’ in personal functioning,” it was also the result of a need for effective soldiering during the Second World War and which manifested itself in the postwar period in the need for effectiveness in organizational behavior, itself modeled after the top-down, command-and-control structure of the military.¹⁷⁷ Unlike the armed forces, however, corporations had to achieve a sort of ‘consent of the governed,’ especially during the critiques of organizational culture that proliferated in the 1950s and 1960s. The result was that so-called ‘self-development plans’ were introduced, first in Career Assessment Centers and then across the corporate world, in which the “candidate with help from his manager constructs a planned program for self-development which typically includes things to be accomplished in the office, in outside activities, and in formal and informal education.”¹⁷⁸ The assessments that emerged in the 1950s and that have flourished increasingly since attempted to give individuals a complete plan for their lives, not merely at work but outside of it as well. In addition, these assessments bolstered the idea that the corporation exists for the benefit of the employee, to help him or her achieve self-development and his or her own personal goals, rather than as a way to extract maximum profit from labor.

Nevertheless, sociologist Nikolas Rose is correct when he notes that:

“The individualizing techniques embodied in the psychologies of development and personality are not linked to a repressive project. On the contrary, they enable one to construe a form of family life, education, or production that simultaneously maximizes the capacity of individuals, their personal contentment, and the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ MacKinnon, “The Role of Assessment Centers,” 17.

efficiency of the institution. The very languages, assessments, and techniques supported by the critics of 'adaptationist' psychology have made it possible to conceive of a way of managing institutional life that could forge an identification between subjective fulfillment and economic advancement, family contentment, parental commitment, and so forth."¹⁷⁹

And indeed, Harrison Gough and the rest of the staff of IPAR in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were trenchant critics of so-called 'adaptationist' psychology, but by using their techniques for the management of corporations built on a top-down, military model of management, the humanistic psychology they promoted produced a version of self-development that had group (and elite) interests at its core. Subjective fulfillment has thus been defined by a sociotechnical system that promotes a very limited number of pathways of thinking, behaving, and living.

¹⁷⁹ Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*, 124.

Chapter 3

Organized Projections and Managed Bodies: David C. McClelland, McBer & Company, and the Business of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), 1962-1985

*“What accounts for the rise in civilization? Not external resources (i.e., markets, minerals, trade routes, or factories), but the entrepreneurial spirit which exploits those resources—a spirit found most often among businessmen.”*¹⁸⁰ Thus began Harvard psychologist David McClelland’s 1962 *Harvard Business Review* article, “Business Drive and National Achievement,” in which he argued that foreign development would best be attained—and foreign aid money best spent—by stimulating the ‘need for achievement’ in small businessmen and entrepreneurs in the Third World. The need for achievement, a personality trait first described and explored by Henry Murray at the Harvard Psychological Clinic in the 1930s, was identified by the amount of time a person spent thinking about improving upon the status quo, imagining how to attain one’s goals with greater efficiency. For McClelland, the need to achieve and its underlying psychological drive, achievement motivation, were the hallmarks of the successful entrepreneur; as such, they were what made businessmen tick, companies grow, and nations prosper. McClelland concluded his 1962 *HBR* article by arguing that the main pillar of U.S. foreign policy should be to, “harness

¹⁸⁰ David C. McClelland, “Business Drive and National Achievement,” *Harvard Business Review* 40, no. 4 (July/August 1962): 99.

some of the enormous reserves of achievement ideology and skill in American business to the gargantuan task of developing poor countries.”¹⁸¹

McClelland posited that structured, progressive economic development would lead to stable, democratic social and political institutions in the decolonizing nations of the Third World. In this belief, McClelland was influenced by modernization theory, the dominant theory of social development in the behavioral sciences in the 1950s and early 1960s. Influential modernization theorists such as Seymour Martin Lipset and Walt Rostow argued that societies progressed from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’ on account of the adoption of industrial technology and consumer capitalism, and that in turn these societies would become liberal, Western-style industrial democracies.¹⁸² McClelland added one more step to the beginning of this sequence, emphasizing the need to cultivate and modify certain psychological and personality traits in order to make people receptive to—and willing agents of—economic development. Like Alex Inkeles and a number of his other colleagues at Harvard’s Department of Social Relations, McClelland emphasized the interplay between personality modification and economic success, for both individuals and nations.¹⁸³

Historian Ellen Herman has noted that attempts to use psychology to foster global economic development were popular in the early Cold War period.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 112.

¹⁸² Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), ch. 2; W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960), ch. 7.

¹⁸³ Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 147; David H. Smith, “Alex Inkeles: 4 March 1920—9 July 2010,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 156, no. 2 (June 2012): 239.

For example, McClelland's doctoral advisor at Yale, Carl Hovland, was central to the Rockefeller Foundation's efforts to use persuasion and attitude change to stimulate economic performance in underdeveloped areas.¹⁸⁴ In addition, McClelland's statements about the psychological foundations of modernity echoed those of psychologist Leonard Doob, who argued that "civilization"—i.e., Western-style industrial and cultural development—had more to do "with the state of affairs 'within people' than with such external, material realities as economic infrastructure, raw materials, population growth, or the character and extent of political institutions."¹⁸⁵ Such sentiments were also quite common among anthropologists at the time, finding expression in the work of scholars such as Margaret Mead, Alfred Irving Hallowell, and others affiliated with the Culture and Personality School.

Many early postwar behavioral scientists, dedicated to the holistic analysis of social phenomena, rejected the traditional division of the social sciences into discrete disciplines and instead posited that, "Reality...could be deciphered by a unified theory of human action."¹⁸⁶ As such, "individuals, rather than formal groups or institutions, were the proper units of analysis," and "Groups, whatever their size, shape, or social origins, were approached as collections of autonomous, self-seeking individuals."¹⁸⁷ Pushing this idea to perhaps its limit, McClelland analyzed each social group as if it were analogous to an individual personality.

¹⁸⁴ Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 137.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 6.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Whether a corporation, a nation, or the world itself, every “body” could be described as an amalgam of needs, motives, and traits, much as one might describe a single individual. Using a shortened version of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), a 31-image projective test designed by Henry Murray and his partner Christiana Morgan at the Harvard Psychological Clinic in the 1930s, McClelland tried to measure in individuals and groups the three personality traits he considered most important for economic behavior: the needs for (1) achievement, (2) power, and (3) affiliation.

These traits corresponded, respectively, to the overriding motivations of the entrepreneur, the executive, and the laborer. While everybody was supposed to have more or less of each need, McClelland said it was the dominant need that determined what type of person (or company, or nation) one was and indicated one’s potential for success in a given role. In light of this, the question that motivates this article is: why did McClelland, after spending the 1950s and 1960s touting the importance of achievement motivation for individual prosperity and the success of businesses and nations, shift his emphasis to highlight the importance of power motivation in the early-to-mid 1970s? In other words, at the start of what has variously been termed the ‘postindustrial’ or ‘neoliberal’ era, and which Daniel Rodgers has provocatively dubbed the ‘age of fracture,’ why did McClelland begin to downplay the importance of individual small businessmen

and entrepreneurs and instead stress the value of large, hierarchical corporations and the virtues of top-level managers and leaders?¹⁸⁸

I suggest that McClelland's metamorphosis was the result of trying to apply the lessons of his earlier national uplift projects to the rapidly changing American corporate environment of the 1970s. During a decade in which, for the first time, a majority of women had paid work outside the home, and as a bevy of civil rights laws were enacted to protect women and minorities in employment, companies were particularly concerned with integrating and making productive a new generation of potentially disruptive employees.¹⁸⁹ These fears were compounded by the fact that millions of seemingly individualistic baby boomers, influenced by the discourse on self-fulfillment and self-actualization, were also trying to enter corporate America.¹⁹⁰ Thus, McClelland argued that just as the United States had had a moral obligation to provide economic aid and commercial guidance to developing nations around the world in the 1960s, so

¹⁸⁸ Daniel Rodgers defines the 'age of fracture' as the last quarter of the twentieth century, when "conceptions of human nature that in the post-World War II era had been thick with context, social circumstance, institutions, and history gave way to conceptions of human nature that stressed choice, agency, performance, and desire" (Rodgers 2011, 3). For more on the rise of postindustrialism and neoliberalism in the 1960s and 1970s, see Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011).

¹⁸⁹ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 106; Frank Dobbin and John R. Sutton, "The Strength of a Weak State: The Rights Revolution and the Rise of Human Resources Management Divisions," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 2 (September 1998); Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

¹⁹⁰ Tom Wolfe, "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening," *New York*, August 23, 1976; Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2005); Thomas K. McCraw, *American Business Since 1920: How It Worked* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Roy S. Jacques, *Manufacturing the Employee: Management Knowledge from the 19th to 21st Centuries* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996).

executives had a duty to manage and provide direction for this new cohort of employees from the 1970s on.

For McClelland, promoting a certain type of managerial power and influence became his solution to fostering economic growth while at the same time integrating a generation of self-seeking individuals into the new corporate environment. In order to further his particular vision of social justice, one that held that a strong, prosperous America—and concomitantly, large, profitable American corporations—were the greatest force for global good, McClelland began to focus chiefly on identifying and developing the ‘need for power’ in white-collar executives. Although he had started a private consulting firm, the Human Resources Development Corporation (HRDC), in 1962 to provide achievement motivation training for small businessmen in places such as India, Tunisia, and Uganda, by the mid-1970s his business (renamed McBer & Company) focused mainly on training high-level corporate executives and U.S. government officials. Drawing on Max Weber’s theory of charismatic leadership, and resonating with the axioms of humanistic business theorists such as Abraham Maslow and Douglas McGregor, McClelland argued that a new ‘socialized’ power elite (that is, leaders with high levels of maturity and ‘impulse control’) would “turn all of [their] so-called followers into leaders...[making them] feel powerful and able to accomplish things on their own.”¹⁹¹ In the early

¹⁹¹ David C. McClelland, “The Two Faces of Power,” *Journal of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (January 1970): 41; David C. McClelland, *Power: The Inner Experience* (New York: Irvington, 1975); S.N. Eisenstadt, “Introduction,” in *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, written by Max Weber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Abraham H. Maslow, *Eupsychian Management* (New York: Richard D. Irwin, 1965); Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill 2006 [1960]).

1970s, at the start of the current era of globalization and deregulation, when corporate America feared for its existence but was in hindsight starting a four-decade march to greater influence and ever-increasing market share, McClelland's power motivation training was directed at creating a corporate hive, constructing a corps of managers and executives who would inspire their subordinates to practice self-motivation and self-leadership in the service of company productivity and profits.¹⁹²

I. Between Yale and Harvard: David C. McClelland, Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan, and the Development of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

David McClelland received his Ph.D. in experimental psychology at Yale in 1941, working principally with Carl Hovland, Leonard Doob, and Robert Sears. Quintessential liberal cold warriors, Hovland and Doob emphasized the benefits that could amass to both the United States and the developing world by managing and directing the psychological capacities of the world's people.¹⁹³ Well known for his *Experiments in Mass Communication* (1949), one of the core volumes of *The American Soldier* series that marked the first major project of the postwar behavioral sciences, Hovland instilled in McClelland a lifelong interest in attitude change as a prerequisite for behavioral modification. At Yale in the 1930s and 1940s, McClelland was also influenced by the experimental behaviorism of

¹⁹² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1989); McCraw, *American Business Since 1920*; Andreas Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2012); Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*.

¹⁹³ It should be noted that Doob's ideas on this front changed during his career; by the mid-1960s, Doob would become a critic of such attempts at 'social engineering.'

Clark Hull, doyen of the psychology department and the Institute of Human Relations.¹⁹⁴ Hull's desire to describe behavior in a rigorous, quantitative way, evidenced by the formal, mathematical learning theory underpinning his study of motivation, would echo on in McClelland's work. However, while Hull's behaviorism may have influenced his methods, McClelland's interests hewed closer to the applied social and cognitive concerns of his mentors Hovland and Doob.

A devout Quaker (despite his Methodist upbringing), McClelland secured a 2-A 'essential occupation' classification during World War II and began a part-time position in Philadelphia in 1943 as Assistant Personnel Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee.¹⁹⁵ While in Philadelphia, McClelland was called upon to teach a number of courses for Donald MacKinnon who was at that time a psychology professor at Bryn Mawr but had taken a leave of absence in early 1944 to join Henry Murray at the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Vera French, one of Murray's doctoral students—as well as a full-time professor at Swarthmore—had quickly filled in to teach MacKinnon's personality course in the spring of 1944. However, with McClelland taking over MacKinnon's classes for the academic year 1944-45, he and French met over dinner to discuss the course and the subject of personality psychology (with which he was mostly unfamiliar).

¹⁹⁴ J.G. Morawski, "Organizing Knowledge and Behavior at Yale's Institute of Human Relations," *Isis* 77, no. 2 (June 1986): 220; David G. Winter, "'Toward a Science of Personality Psychology': David McClelland's Development of Empirically Derived TAT Measures," *History of Psychology* 1, no. 2 (May 1998): 131-32.

¹⁹⁵ The biographical information in this paragraph comes from David G. Winter, "'Toward a Science of Personality Psychology': David McClelland's Development of Empirically Derived TAT Measures," *History of Psychology* 1, no. 2 (May 1998): 133-35.

It was here that French introduced McClelland to the TAT, which would become his preferred investigative tool for the remainder of his career.

As previously noted, Henry Murray and his partner Christiana Morgan developed the TAT at the Harvard Psychological Clinic in the 1930s. The projective test consisted of 31 images, many of which had been taken from popular magazines such as *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. Depending on the subject's age and gender, a subset of 20 of these images would be administered to the individual, who would then be asked to tell a short, imaginative story about each scene. The stories would then be coded and scored based on the presence of either 28 'needs' (i.e., innate motivations) or 20 'presses' (i.e., environmental factors) and then synthesized to create a personality profile of the individual. Devoted to Jungian analysis and the concept of personality archetypes, Murray and Morgan were interested in exploring the range of actions an individual might take under a given set of circumstances.

Murray and Morgan developed the TAT while working on *Explorations of Personality* (1938), a multi-dimensional assessment of the personalities of fifty Harvard undergraduates.¹⁹⁶ Murray was enthusiastic about the TAT because it

¹⁹⁶ H.A. Murray and C.D. Morgan, "A Method for Investigating Fantasies: The Thematic Apperception Test," *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* 34, no. 2 (August 1935); Henry A. Murray, *Explorations in Personality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938); H.A. Murray, *Thematic Apperception Test: Manual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943); Annie Murphy Paul, *The Cult of Personality Testing: How Personality Tests Are Leading Us to Miseducate Our Children, Mismanage Our Companies, and Misunderstand Ourselves* (New York: Free Press, 2005), ch. 4; James William Anderson, "Henry A. Murray and the Creation of the Thematic Apperception Test," in *Evocative Images: The Thematic Apperception Test and the Art of Projection*, eds. Lon Gieser and Morris I. Stein (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1999), ch. 3; Rebecca Lemov, "X-Rays of Inner Worlds: The Mid-Twentieth-Century American Projective Test Movement," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 47, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 260-62.

supposedly measured not only perception, or what the subject actually saw in an image, but *apperception*, the unconscious processes that led a viewer to imbue an image with multiple connotations.¹⁹⁷ If perception were sensory, apperception provided “additional, internal meaning.”¹⁹⁸ While similar in many ways to the Rorschach and other projective tests, Murray and Morgan believed the TAT’s depiction of human actors in common scenes would elicit more personally meaningful stories than the unstructured images of the Rorschach.

For Murray, the TAT was supposed to give insight into an individual’s particular life story; although trained as a medical doctor, he was devoted to seeing a person’s case history as *sui generis*, having unique importance and meaning for that individual.¹⁹⁹ Based mainly on psychoanalytic principles, Murray’s work had either been ridiculed or ignored by much of the Yale faculty during McClelland’s time there. However, while in Philadelphia, McClelland not only received a sympathetic introduction to Murray’s TAT from Vera French, but he also drew on the library and notes of MacKinnon, an eclectic psychologist steeped in psychoanalysis. McClelland would later note that, after his year at Bryn Mawr, his whole career became an attempt to “deal with Freudian psychodynamics in the rigorous quantitative way characteristic of a modern behavioral scientist like Hull.”²⁰⁰ However, whereas Murray used the TAT to explore the uniqueness of individuals, McClelland instead used it to explore what

¹⁹⁷ Lemov, “X-Rays of Inner Worlds,” 260.

¹⁹⁸ Anderson, “Henry A. Murray,” 26.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Winter, “Toward a Science of Personality Psychology,” 135.

he believed were the deep homologies between people, businesses, and nations.²⁰¹

II. Harvard's Department of Social Relations (DSR) and the Creation of the Human Resources Development Corporation (HRDC)

McClelland served as professor of psychology at Wesleyan from the end of the war until 1956. During this time, he also spent a sabbatical year (1949-50) at Harvard's Department of Social Relations (DSR), and was deputy director of the Ford Foundation's Behavioral Sciences Division (1952-53). However, in 1956 McClelland decamped to Harvard full-time, joining Henry Murray at the Department of Social Relations. Historian Joel Isaac notes that the DSR was founded in 1946 by a group of social scientists, including Murray, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Talcott Parsons, who had attended the seminars of biochemist and sociologist Lawrence Henderson and had been inculcated with the ideas of Italian economist and sociologist Vilfredo Pareto. Keen to apply the concepts of physical and biological regulation to social systems, Henderson had instilled in this 'Pareto Circle' the lesson that action was often motivated by irrational sentiments that derived, ultimately, from biological or physiological realities.²⁰² The attempt to use biology, sociology, and psychology to explain seemingly irrational behavior would thus become a model for the interdisciplinary behavioral science of the nascent DSR.

²⁰¹ This is not to say that the TAT could not be used in group settings. Henry Murray, in fact, preferred the administration of the TAT in groups if the goal was to analyze the holistic 'psychology of the group' (which was often the case in his work with the OSS).

²⁰² Joel Isaac, *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 66-67.

Two other principles that drove the work of the DSR faculty were (1) a focus on the study of individuals and their adjustment to the environment, and (2) a dedication to the practical application of their scientific endeavors.²⁰³ Often realized in the environs of government and politics (Murray and O.H. Mowrer had, e.g., worked at the OSS, and Kluckhohn was affiliated with the Office of War Information), McClelland fulfilled his applied ambitions by using his research on personality and motivation to promote economic development and business enterprise. In this venture, he was greatly influenced by Talcott Parsons's reading of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.²⁰⁴ He recalled that when he "began trying to understand the role of the achievement motive in society, I was reminded of Max Weber's description of the entrepreneur under the influence of the Protestant ethic, because Parsons had translated Weber's book...into English, and it was very much part of the general knowledge of the department."²⁰⁵ However, he faced a similar dilemma to many other liberal social scientists in the middle decades of the twentieth century: figuring out how to transform Weber's sociological insights, many of which had originated from a

²⁰³ Ibid, Intro., 175.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, chs. 1 and 5; Jamie Cohen-Cole, *The Open Mind: Cold War Politics and the Sciences of Human Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), ch. 3; Hamilton Cravens, "Column Right, March! Nationalism, Scientific Positivism, and the Conservative Turn of the American Social Sciences in the Cold War Era," in *Cold War Social Science: Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature*, eds. Mark Solovey and Hamilton Cravens (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 128-30; Roger E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine, "Toward a History of the Social Sciences," in *The History of the Social Sciences since 1945*, eds. Roger E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 210; Lemov, "X-Rays of Inner Worlds," 261.

²⁰⁵ David C. McClelland, "Introduction: Personal Sources of My Intellectual Interests," in *Motives, Personality, and Society: Selected Papers*, ed. David C. McClelland (New York: Praeger, 1984), 24.

conservative political agenda, and put them to work for the purposes of bolstering projects of social uplift, minority engagement, and global development.²⁰⁶

McClelland's solution was to start his own private consulting firm, the Human Resources Development Corporation (HRDC), in 1962. He believed that Harvard's administration was becoming more reactionary and that, as such, "social action research could not readily be carried out within the context of the university" in the early 1960s.²⁰⁷ Thus, he insisted that starting a private business dedicated to motivation training would be the most effective way of putting his scientific research to practical use and promoting global social and economic development. After holding a small pilot program in the Boston area to assess the feasibility of the concept, McClelland and HRDC co-founder David Berlew started to do research and training abroad with struggling small businessmen.²⁰⁸

HRDC's first achievement motivation course was held in India in 1964 and consisted of 52 businessmen from Kakinada, a port city in Andhra Pradesh on the east coast of the country. Traveling to Hyderabad, more than 300 miles to the west, these men participated in a 10-day course led by McClelland at the Small Industries Extension Training (SIET) Institute. He and his staff chose participants from the relatively faraway city of Kakinada, believing that the willingness to complete a 300-mile journey indicated at least a modicum of

²⁰⁶ Thomas Meaney, "Clifford Geertz, 'New-Stateology,' and the Problem of Decolonization, 1953-77" (paper, HISRESS: History of Recent Social Sciences, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, June 6, 2015), 4; Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

²⁰⁷ McClelland, "Personal Sources," 24.

²⁰⁸ David C. McClelland, "Achievement Motivation Can Be Developed," *Harvard Business Review* 43, no. 6 (November/December 1965): 8-12.

achievement motivation. After administering a shortened 4 or 6 image TAT protocol to each participant, McClelland and his staff, “explain[ed] the ‘achievement motivation syndrome,’ initiate[d] self-study to determine how closely one’s motives matched the model [of achievement motivation], and practice[d] goal setting and planning around one’s own business.”²⁰⁹ The achievement motivation syndrome could be identified in those businessmen who told stories about the TAT images that had elements of: (1) “outperforming someone else,” (2) “meeting or surpassing some self-imposed standard,” (3) “doing something unique,” or (4) “advancing one’s career.”²¹⁰

For McClelland, one of the primary goals of the course was to modify the self-conceptions of the participants. He chose India in part because he believed business there was “still locked in the patterns and the fatalism of the past,” and that Indian businessmen were “set in their ways and resistant to change.”²¹¹ Thus, he wanted to instill in these businessmen a belief that they were agents of their own destiny, able to modify their actions and attitudes to make their businesses more profitable and their lives more fulfilling. If successful, such training was supposed to have an outsized effect on national development, turning struggling small businessman into successful entrepreneurs. McClelland hypothesized that, on account of their success, these entrepreneurs would each be able to hire at least eight more workers and provide them with achievement motivation

²⁰⁹ David C. McClelland to Noel McGinn, November 4, 1974, David C. McClelland Papers, Box 87, HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²¹⁰ Summary of the Scoring Systems for Achievement, Affiliation and Power Motivation, TAT Pictures Used in Research, 1979, David C. McClelland Papers, Box 100, HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²¹¹ “Teaching Business Success,” *Time*, April 25, 1969, 64-66.

training.²¹² Eventually, McClelland hoped to set up permanent motivation training centers around the globe run by national government agencies. HRDC was merely to be the private catalyst for getting these programs off the ground, demonstrating the effectiveness of achievement motivation training for promoting economic growth in developing nations.

Between 1964 and 1969, HRDC (renamed McBer & Company in the mid-1960s) provided achievement motivation training in a number of countries around the world, including Uganda, Tunisia, Ireland, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, and Poland, as well as the United States. During this time, well over half of its revenue (which in 1969 was approximately \$1 million) came from public sources of funding, including grants from U.S. federal agencies and foreign governments.²¹³ And much of the rest of its income came from private foundations such as the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation. In other words, during the 1960s, HRDC/McBer had only a few contracts with private businesses, none of which were particularly lucrative. In other words, by the end of the decade, McBer resembled a public-private partnership, much like the Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) that proliferated in the mid-to-late 1960s.²¹⁴ However, for reasons that will be explained below, McBer would be transformed into a standard management

²¹² David C. McClelland to Noel McGinn, November 4, 1974, David C. McClelland Papers, Box 87, HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²¹³ Historical Analysis, 1982, McBer 1982 [1981-1982], David C. McClelland Papers, Box 11, HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²¹⁴ Examples of prominent current and former FFRDCs include the RAND Corporation, MIT's Radiation Laboratory, Caltech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and the Navy's Operations Research Group.

consulting firm by the early 1980s, one that derived a majority of its revenue (which had grown to over \$5 million by the mid-1980s) from private contracts with large corporations.²¹⁵

III. The Need for Power, Charismatic Leadership, and ‘The Curacao Intervention’

As previously noted, McBer’s interventions during the 1960s were geared toward bolstering achievement motivation, creating entrepreneurs with the goal of sparking the engine of business development around the world. Although McClelland occasionally hinted that successful entrepreneurs might have a different psychological profile than successful executives, this point was not initially belabored. However, by the end of the 1970s, and in light of both socio-political developments and the results of their own research, McClelland and his colleagues stressed the importance of ‘power motivation’ for successful management. The services that McBer offered followed suit, transitioning from achievement motivation training for small businessmen to power motivation training and consulting for senior executives at large, multinational corporations.

The rehabilitation of the concept of leadership provided the backdrop for this change. With the assassinations of John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, many scholars, including McClelland, began to reevaluate the importance of charismatic leaders for successful—and perhaps even progressive—governance. Whereas American society had been circumspect about the concentration of power since the rise of fascism and Nazism—a

²¹⁵ J.H. Kennedy and K.K. Burke, *An Analysis of the Management Consulting Business in the U.S. Today* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Consultants News, 1987), 29.

sentiment reinforced by the publication of Theodor Adorno et al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950—the uncertainty and turbulence of the mid-to-late 1960s offered plenty of fuel for the reevaluation of leadership. Perhaps best elucidated by John Gardner in his much-publicized article, “The Anti-Leadership Vaccine” (1965), the former OSS psychologist—and President Johnson’s Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare—pointed out that a considerable number of people lamented the lack of leadership in contemporary America and had begun to think of ways to relieve this deficit through educational or institutional reform.

Much of the social scientific discussion of charismatic leadership in America in the 1960s piggybacked off of its application in research on foreign development. As Robert Tucker noted, scholars such as Edward Shils and David Apter had “tended to approach the phenomenon of charisma in the context of a study of modernization and political development in ex-colonial ‘new states,’” resulting in a conviction that charismatic leadership was the “fulcrum of the transition from colonial-ruled traditional society to politically independent modern society.”²¹⁶ This valorization of leadership made its way back into the mainstream of American scholarly discourse in the mid-to-late 1960s, influenced in large part by the uncertainty surrounding the handling of the Vietnam War (and the Johnson administration’s ‘credibility gap’), the numerous protests and sit-ins on college campuses, and the rapid rise of the New Left and Black Power

²¹⁶ Robert C. Tucker, “The Theory of Charismatic Leadership,” *Daedalus* 97, no. 3 (Summer 1968): 734. For more on social scientists’ analysis of charisma post-Weber, see Eisenstadt (1968).

movements.²¹⁷ In aggregate, these developments led scholars and laypeople alike to wonder whether American society was suffering because of its ‘allergy’ to leadership, authority, and power.

These developments provided the backdrop for McBer’s 1969 consulting assignment for the Curacao Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Their work on the Caribbean island nation was indicative of the changing fortunes of the concept of power, and acted as a catalyst for McBer’s long-term transition away from ‘achievement’ and towards ‘power’ motivation training during the 1970s. The Chamber, a semi-public organization consisting predominantly of white businessmen and industrialists, entered into a contract with McBer in October 1969 to provide achievement motivation training in hopes of encouraging business activity on the island.²¹⁸ A few months prior, a labor dispute (involving a group of plumbers at a Shell Oil contractor) had escalated into large demonstrations, resulting in a number of incidents of burning, looting, and violence, as well as the shooting of several politicians. The fear that this type of violence would reoccur, coupled with the importance of Shell Oil for the nation’s economy, prompted the Chamber to hire McBer.²¹⁹ They were told to focus on the

²¹⁷ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993); Andreas Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006); Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Boston: De Capo Press, 2001), chs. 5 and 6; Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 201-08; Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2012).

²¹⁸ David E. Berlew and William E. LeClere, “Social Intervention in Curacao: A Case Study,” *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 10, no. 1 (January 1974): 45.

²¹⁹ Berlew and LeClere stated in 1974 that, “Approximately 60 per cent of all employment on the Island depends on the Dutch-owned Shell Oil Company refinery” (Berlew and LeClere, “Social Intervention in Curacao: A Case Study,” 33).

Antillean (i.e., black) community: despite being the majority group and holding the lion's share of political power, those of African descent were underrepresented in professional and managerial positions compared to those of Dutch descent. As such, the President of the Chamber of Commerce had four objectives for McBer's intervention: "(1) to encourage Antilleans to become associated with existing businesses, (2) to increase the amount of commercial activity on Curacao by encouraging Antillean business activity, (3) to create new jobs, and (4) to give Antilleans a sense of participation in their community."²²⁰

McBer's intervention consisted of a number of interrelated parts. Focused on providing a "heightened sense of efficacy and independence among black Antilleans," McBer combined its standard achievement motivation training with "group dynamics training" that emphasized, "participative leadership, conflict management, and the dynamics of competition and collaboration."²²¹ Taken from the work of humanistic psychologist and leadership guru Warren Bennis and management professor—and 'coercive persuasion' (i.e., brainwashing) researcher—Edgar Schein, group dynamics training was supposed to motivate those already affiliated with industry, in this case those directly or indirectly employed by Shell Oil.²²² In addition to this, another element of McBer's intervention was the design of an 'outlet program' to prevent future social unrest

²²⁰ Ibid, 30.

²²¹ Ibid, 34.

²²² Edgar H. Schein and Warren G. Bennis, *Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods: The Laboratory Approach* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965). Group dynamics training continues to be taught at business schools around the world. For just one example, see the curriculum of Columbia University's Executive Masters Program:

<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/organization-and-leadership/executive-education/xma/curriculum/>.

or violence; the program was supposed to provide educational and job opportunities to “ensure socially and economically productive outlets for individuals whose aspiration level was raised by motivation training.”²²³

McBer’s consultants wanted both to intervene in the psychology of black Antilleans, and to modify the material conditions on the island, ensuring that increased ambition was not squandered and turned into frustration, despair, and violence. Such a program, whether well-intentioned or not, resembled the modification efforts that business owners and corporations have used for well over a century to staunch labor unrest and try to create more pliable, efficient workers.²²⁴ In the same vein as Elton Mayo’s Hawthorne Studies in the 1920s and 1930s, the consultants at McBer drew on ideas from human relations theory and its offspring, Organizational Development, to try to increase motivation and worker satisfaction by making it seem as if the economic and political elites shared the same needs and interests as the workers. Given Curacao’s economic dependence on the multinational behemoth Shell Oil, McBer’s usual focus on cultivating small businessmen and entrepreneurs seemed out of place. Instead, as the introduction of group dynamics training and the outlet program to staunch

²²³ Berlew and LeClere, “Social Intervention in Curacao,” 34.

²²⁴ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998 [1974]); Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA’s Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (New York: The New Press, 2001); Richard Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge: A History of the Hawthorne Experiments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of an industrial Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1933). Such tactics have included everything from suggestion boxes in factories, to company unions, to Elton Mayo’s research at the Hawthorne Works of Western Electric, where he and his colleagues noted (perhaps erroneously) that workers improve when they believe someone is observing them and cares about their needs. The mollification of workers by such means was also central to the ‘corporate liberalism’ that emerged in the Progressive era and was still in full force in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Weinstein 1968; Rodgers 1982).

labor unrest made clear, McBer's intervention was not merely about improving the fortunes of the Antillean community, but also about finding a way to better integrate the populace into what was essentially a 'company island.'

The consultants were aware of the controversial nature of their work. They were ambivalent about the fact that the group that hired them (the Chamber of Commerce) was not the group they were there to influence (the black Antillean community), and asked skeptically whether the Chamber was "seeking ideas and collaborators, or just approval to run 'their' program of community attitude adjustment."²²⁵ They also wondered about the ethics of their reforms, insofar as they resembled therapeutic interventions. The lead consultants, David Berlew and William LeClere, worried about the fact that their assignment, much like a therapeutic encounter, might reveal problems that could not be fixed before the end of the 'session' (i.e., contract), whether for lack of funds, loss of will, or failure to achieve their goals. Berlew and LeClere thus asked:

"Is social intervention like the Curacao case business or therapy? Is it ethical or professional to contract to do a piece of work for a certain amount of money, knowing that you cannot anticipate all that may happen or the amount of treatment that may be required to work through problems that surface? Is it even professional to start a job you are not certain you can finish?"²²⁶

Their solution to this dilemma was to select and train a cadre of native consultants, consisting of "businessmen, social workers, youth leaders, behavioral scientists, civil servants, and labor leaders."²²⁷ The goal was to ensure

²²⁵ Berlew and LeClere, "Social Intervention in Curacao," 47.

²²⁶ Ibid, 49.

²²⁷ Ibid, 37.

that motivation training could continue for years, even after McBer's departure. These residents were supposed to be the island's teachers and leaders; as such, they were supposed to care more about exerting influence over others and helping them to succeed rather than in their own personal achievement. Unsurprisingly, the people that McBer selected to become consultants—because they were those believed to have significant 'power motivation'—were the ones who already wielded significant influence on the island. Thus, the selection process served to reify Curacao's existing social structure, where a small group of people, many of them affiliated with Shell Oil, exerted power and influence, supposedly for the benefit of the entire community. In recognizing the economic importance of Shell and trying to better integrate the interests of the community with those of the company, McBer also legitimated the top-down corporate structure that mapped onto Curacao's social hierarchy.

Unlike many of the prior locations in which McBer had consulted, Curacao was a relatively developed country with a dominant industrial concern and a visible socio-racial stratification. In addition, the consultants noted that, on account of the "cross-mixture of the voodoo culture and the Dutch educational system," Curacao residents (of all ethnic groups) were (1) concerned with controlling their lives and the lives of others, often through magical power, but also (2) deferential to authority and expertise.²²⁸ Such an environment proved ideal for McBer's Harvard-trained Ph.D. consultants to offer the populace control over the "powerful new change technologies" of the TAT and its associated

²²⁸ Ibid, 51.

motivation training program; the consultants noted that “the magical power of trainers was a continual theme throughout the intervention.”²²⁹ Although this magical power was originally associated with the Curacao’s voodoo culture, it would soon be applied to American corporate culture as well, bolstering the notion that consultants had an uncanny ability to create change by cultivating the abilities of managers and executives.

The concern with power that the Curacao intervention sparked in the early 1970s became a standard part of McBer’s stable of programs. They began to train people in exerting ‘socialized power,’ which, as opposed to ‘personalized power,’ was described as having an interest in changing others for their own sake rather than for oneself. Those trained in socialized power were supposed to become institution builders and pillars of their community, rather than authoritarians with a winner-take-all mentality. They were also said to increase feelings of agency and participation in those under them on socio-corporate ladder.²³⁰ The blurring of the line between community and company, so easy to do in Curacao because of Shell’s dominance on the island, became the general model for many of McBer’s interventions in the 1970s and 1980s; they goal was to achieve community uplift and an increased sense of group participation by devoting themselves to creating leaders with socialized power motivation. McBer’s attempts to engage in social action by developing top-level managers led to a normative understanding of a community as best modeled after a corporation,

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid, 50.

with powerful leaders on top, achievement-oriented professionals in the middle, and laborers at the bottom (similar in many ways to the CPI's distinction between Alphas, Betas, and Gammas). In the estimation of McClelland and his colleagues, training those at the top in the correct use of power had become the most effective way to ensure a productive, fulfilling, and harmonious society, corporation, or nation.

IV. Power and Self-Reflexivity in the Social Sciences and Corporate Management

In 1970, shortly after the Curacao intervention, McClelland published an article in the *Journal of International Affairs* titled, "The Two Faces of Power." In this piece, McClelland first put into print one of the primary lessons that McBer's consultants had learned during their assignments in the late 1960s: that the need to achieve did not prepare people for leadership positions. McClelland remarked that:

*"...it is fairly clear that a high need to Achieve does not equip a man to deal effectively with managing human relationships...I shall not forget the moment when I learned that the president of one of the most successful achievement-oriented firms we had been studying scored exactly zero in n[eed for] Achievement! Up to that point I had fallen into the easy assumption that a man with a high need to Achieve does better work, gets promoted faster, and ultimately ends up as president of a company...there is now little doubt that it was a dramatic way of calling attention to the fact that stimulating achievement motivation in others requires a different motive and a different set of skills than wanting achievement satisfaction for oneself."*²³¹

For McClelland, the concern for achievement on a grand scale, in corporations and nations, had led to an overriding interest in power. Since McClelland's

²³¹ McClelland, "Two Faces of Power," 30.

research had “shifted in focus from the individual with high n[eed for] Achievement to the climate which encourages him and rewards him for doing well,” he and the staff at McBer were now interested in finding out what types of social and group dynamics allowed those with a high need to Achieve to succeed in organizations.²³² Unlike a number of scholars—such as C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, or Daniel Bell—who wrote extensively about the postwar corporate form, McClelland did not criticize organized, (post-) industrial society and its effect on the personalities of its denizens or on the American tradition of liberal individualism. Instead, more in line with the beliefs of Peter Drucker and Abraham Maslow, McClelland accepted that hierarchical management was necessary to motivate those who found themselves (as an increasing number of Americans did) working in large organizations.²³³ Since the “man with high n[eed for] Achievement seldom can act alone” and is often “caught up in an organizational context in which he is managed, controlled, or directed by others,” McClelland said that he and his colleagues had to “shift our attention to those who are managing him, to those who are concerned about organizational relationships—to the leaders of men.”²³⁴

The first group of leaders that McClelland theorized about was his own staff at McBer. Having worked for years to raise the achievement motivation of thousands of people across the globe, McClelland felt compelled to understand his and his colleagues’ own actions as typical of those who were motivated by

²³² Ibid, 31.

²³³ William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (New York: Verso, 2016, 2015), 146-47.

²³⁴ McClelland, “Two Faces of Power, 30-31.

power. Like a bevy of postwar psychologists who were “led to a reflexive position by their practical scientific investigations and interventions,” McClelland’s self-reflexive turn was instigated by his interest in being a facilitator of psychological change.²³⁵ In particular, the McBer staff noted that, in those cases where they had been most effective at raising achievement motivation, they had also been accused of ‘brainwashing’ their clients.²³⁶ Thus, McClelland said they needed to learn how to arrest this backlash so that their clients—and the communities in which they lived and worked—would accept McBer’s change efforts. Their way of doing this was to model their interventions on humanistic or person-centered therapy: the consultants said they experienced less resistance when they made their subjects feel like agents (or in their terms, ‘origins’) of self-change.²³⁷ Like humanistic clinical interventions, McClelland emphasized the benefit of letting clients feel like they were developing themselves into the businesspeople they wanted to become.

McClelland also believed he needed to rehabilitate the notion of power itself in America. He said that if McBer’s consultants could project an image of responsible leadership, they would experience little to no resistance to their motivation training programs. Stating that leaders and educators were in fact one

²³⁵ James H. Capshew, “Reflexivity Revisited: Changing Psychology’s Frame of Reference,” in *Psychology’s Territories: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives from Different Disciplines*, eds. Mitchell G. Ash and Thomas Sturm (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 348.

²³⁶ McClelland, *Power*, 255-56.

²³⁷ McClelland, “Two Faces of Power,” 40; Richard deCharms, *Personal Causation: The Internal Affective Determinants of Behavior* (New York: Academic Press, 1968); Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory* (London: Constable, 1951); Carl Rogers, “The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 21, no. 2 (April 1957); Abraham H. Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (July 1943).

in the same—basing his argument on the etymology of the word ‘education,’ from the Latin *educare* meaning to ‘lead out’—McClelland said that a leader was someone (like himself and his staff) who helped people to “set their goals, by communicating them widely throughout the group, taking initiative in formulating means of achieving the goals, and finally, by inspiring the members of the group to feel strong enough to work hard for those goals.”²³⁸ By making power respectable again, he looked to convince others to try to attain leadership and executive positions instead of being satisfied with careers as achievement-oriented professionals. Thus, he saw his own efforts as a demonstration of, and a step towards realizing, “the ultimate paradox of social leadership and social power,” which was that “an effective leader...turn[s] all of his so-called followers into leaders.”²³⁹

McClelland’s self-reflexive turn at the start of the 1970s stimulated McBer’s change into a more traditional management-consulting firm, providing executives and top-level government officials with power motivation and leadership skills training. The transition happened gradually, however, by integrating some aspects of power motivation training into their existing programs for struggling small businessmen. For example, McBer set up a Business Leadership Training (BLT) course in the Twin Cities in 1972, sponsored by the Minneapolis Metropolitan Economic Development Association and funded by the Office of Minority Business Enterprise. Based on imagination exercises

²³⁸ McClelland, “Two Faces of Power,” 45.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 40.

and game playing facilitated by the TAT, the BLT course integrated achievement and power motivation training to help African-American businessmen and women learn skills such as problem solving, goal setting, long-term planning, and responsible risk taking.²⁴⁰ One of the core exercises of the BLT course was to help individuals “learn how to effectively [...] motivate others to produce desired results” by roleplaying a consultant or manager and directing an ‘employee’ to build a tower out of blocks.²⁴¹ The goal of the exercise was to help participants “determine their motivational styles—how well they motivate (or de-motivate) subordinates in a stress situation.”²⁴² One participant, having learned from the course that individual success and social action could be intertwined, went on to state that, “[BLT] helped me gain self-confidence, to believe in myself and what I could accomplish if I really wanted to. I have become involved in community affairs, not only as a participant, but as a leader.”²⁴³

The transition to cultivating the need for power was also evident in McClelland’s work with Massachusetts Achievement Trainers (MAT), a minority-owned business located in Roxbury, a predominantly African-American neighborhood in Boston. The founders of MAT, having participated in a number of courses McClelland had designed for minority businesspeople in the Cambridge area, proceeded to start their own achievement motivation training

²⁴⁰ “BLT—What’s Happening?,” David C. McClelland Papers, Box 25, Folder ‘MEDA Reports, March 1977,’ HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

business.²⁴⁴ From its inception in 1966 until 1969, MAT focused primarily on working with the so-called ‘poverty population,’ helping un- or under-employed Hispanic and black workers transform themselves from “disillusioned men into constructive, high-need achievers,” by (1) increasing their awareness of their own needs, wants, and potential, (2) helping them cultivate a positive self-image, and (3) encouraging them to “articulate and inter-relate their personal and career objectives.”²⁴⁵ MAT reorganized in 1969, however, bringing McClelland onto its advisory board, and changing its name to Motive Acquisition Technology Corporation (MATC), in recognition of its expanded service providing both achievement and power motivation training. Having worked on projects for such companies as the Aviation Corporation of America, the Boston Gas Company, the Hotel Corporation of America, and the New England Merchants National Bank, the revamped MATC no longer advertised its services—which now included executive search and organizational development—to struggling minority businesspersons, but instead to national and international corporations.²⁴⁶

In 1975, McClelland consolidated his and his colleagues’ research on power motivation into the popular book *Power: The Inner Experience*. This book served as McClelland’s extended manifesto in favor of rehabilitating the reputation of power in American society, politics, and business. He opened the

²⁴⁴ “Massachusetts Achievement Trainers, Inc., David C. McClelland Papers, Box 38, Folder ‘Massachusetts Achievement Trainers [1966-1970] [3 of 3],’ HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²⁴⁵ “Training and Consulting Services,” David C. McClelland Papers, Box 40, Folder ‘Motive Acquisition Technology Corporation [1969-1970],’ HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

book by recounting a study by his doctoral student David Winter, who found that those who watched a film of JFK's inaugural address and then wrote seemingly unrelated stories afterward—in a sort of thematic apperception test *sans* TAT—wrote more about strength, power, and confidence than those who had watched a film about lab equipment.²⁴⁷ Making the case that powerful leaders produce powerful citizens, he reiterated that Winter “did not find that the students exposed to the Kennedy film thought more afterwards about submission, following, obedience, or loyalty,” but were instead “apparently strengthened and uplifted by the experience; they felt more powerful, rather than less powerful or submissive.”²⁴⁸ For McClelland, this result was further vindication of Max Weber's analysis of charisma, insofar as effective charismatic leaders did not force their followers to submit, but instead “obtained their effects through *Begeisterung*,” a word often translated as ‘inspiration’ or, more precisely, ‘inspiration.’²⁴⁹

In *Power*, McClelland also began to make explicit his case against certain liberal political policies of the 1960s. For instance, borrowing explicitly from the arguments of the Black Power movement, McClelland said that charity and welfare programs for minorities were in fact subtle forms of domination. He noted that white liberals were surprised to find “their efforts to help blacks proudly rejected” when “The blacks recognized eventually that the more help they accepted, the more they were acknowledging their weakness or their inferior

²⁴⁷ McClelland, *Power*, 7.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 259.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 260.

position.”²⁵⁰ McClelland used the Black Power movement’s radical critique of welfare to bolster his own position that those in power were most munificent when they showed others how to cultivate and wield that power, rather than relinquishing it or trying to share it. This belief went hand-in-hand with his increased interest in selling his services, helping executives in large corporations learn how to empower themselves and their many subordinates rather than setting up public programs to try to raise the achievement motivations of struggling entrepreneurs.

In 1976, shortly after the publication of *Power*, McClelland and the new CEO of McBer, David Burnham, published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* titled, “Power is the Great Motivator.” Writing for a receptive audience of managers, executives, and business scholars in what is generally considered to be “the most influential publication on the theory and practice of management,” McClelland and Burnham continued to critique the “bogeyman of authoritarianism” in business, reminding their sympathetic readers that, after all, “management is an influence game” and that, at its base, management should be about “helping [one’s subordinates] to get things done.”²⁵¹ Although they reiterated the idea that a manager’s need for power had to be ‘socialized’ so that his or her actions benefitted the organization and not merely the individual, they also noted that the most effective (and most respected) leaders were those who

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 18-19.

²⁵¹ Nils Gilman, “The Prophet of Post-Fordism: Peter Drucker and the Legitimation of the Corporation,” in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nelson Lichtenstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 110; David C. McClelland and David H. Burnham, “Power is the Great Motivator,” *Harvard Business Review* 54, no. 2 (March/April 1976): 104-05.

had “a high need for power and an interest in influencing others, both greater than their interest in being liked.”²⁵² At the end of the article, hammering home to the readers of *HBR* the idea that socialized power motivation was necessary not only for good management but also for good political leadership and personal relations, they noted that with socialized power motivation, countries could “control their destinies beyond their borders without being aggressive,” and that individuals could “control their subordinates and influence others around them without resorting to coercion or to an authoritarian management style.”²⁵³

In essence, McClelland and Burnham were telling executives that the skills that made them successful in business were transferable to many domains of human endeavor, such that leaders should naturally find themselves at the top of most social hierarchies. They argued that the display of power was really nothing more than a type of “disinterested statesmanship” which had a “vital role to play at the top of both countries and companies.”²⁵⁴ The consummate postwar behavioral scientist, McClelland continued to argue for the deep homology between individuals, companies, and countries, making the case that power motivation was *the* vital executive function necessary to maintain and grow any complex body.

By the end of the 1970s, McClelland took on a more limited role at McBer, having turned his attention to health psychology and the relationship between power motivation, stress, and illness. Despite his decreased role, McBer

²⁵² McClelland and Burnham, “Power is the Great Motivator,” 109-10.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

continued to expand under the leadership of David Burnham and, later, Richard Boyatzis. Although he would eventually become a management professor at Case Western and one of the leading lights of the emotional intelligence (or EQ) movement, Boyatzis spent much of his early career as a consultant and, later, President and CEO of McBer & Company. Boyatzis solidified McBer's previously tacit move away from helping small businesspersons, acknowledging in a new mission statement that McBer was "in the management consulting business" and that its "goal [was] to help managers improve effectiveness through increasing the return on human assets."²⁵⁵ Boyatzis also revised McBer's pricing policy, noting that their prices should reflect the two ultimate objectives of the firm: profit and growth.²⁵⁶

As Barbara Ehrenreich has pointed out, the dual objectives of profit and growth are the main objectives of all corporations—and perhaps all 'bodies'—in the era of late capitalism.²⁵⁷ And for Boyatzis, management seemed even more crucial to the achievement these objectives in the emerging postindustrial age than in earlier periods. In his 1982 book *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*, he argued that the increased centrality of the service sector to American business meant that managers—and management

²⁵⁵ Richard E. Boyatzis' Memorandum to Vice Presidents and Department Managers, David C. McClelland Papers, Box 11, Folder 'McBer and Company [1977-1980], HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²⁵⁶ Richard E. Boyatzis' "A New Pricing Policy," David C. McClelland Papers, Box 11, Folder 'McBer and Company [1977-1980], HUGFP 145, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

²⁵⁷ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America* (New York: Picador, 2009), 8-9; Emily Martin, *Flexible Bodies: The Role of Immunity in American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 208.

consultants—had to be that much more effective in organizing and motivating the human capital under their control. This human capital, which he defined (following a number of other scholars) as the “skill, dexterity, and knowledge of the populace,” was said to be the, “critical input that determined the rate of growth of the economy and the well-being of the population.”²⁵⁸ At a time when the service industry accounted for 66% of U.S. GDP, Boyatzis said that it was “the competence of managers that determines, in large part, the return that organizations realize from their human capital, or human resources.”²⁵⁹ The focus on the competence of managers, as opposed to the skills of the workforce, was part of the broader turn towards devoting an increasing amount of resources to the top of the organizational hierarchy, and was central to the belief that the increased fortunes of executives would, in time, ‘trickle-down’ to the rest of the working population.

Boyatzis argued that the best leaders achieved the objectives of the group by forging alliances, creating networks and coalitions to work towards shared ends. In other words, leaders were those who could collapse the distinction between personal and group success. Boyatzis and McClelland reiterated this idea in a co-authored article published in 1982 in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* titled, “Leadership Motive Pattern and Long-Term Success in Management.” They noted that the most effective managers, although keenly able to make subordinates feel as though working for the group furthered their own personal

²⁵⁸ Richard E. Boyatzis, *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance* (New York: Wiley, 1982), 1.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

interests, had unexpected results on a scale of ‘emotional maturity,’ scoring surprisingly low on ‘mutuality’ (i.e., caring about the group more than oneself) but had quite high scores on ‘autonomy.’ In other words, the best managers had indeed collapsed the distinction between person and group, not by seeing themselves as part of the larger whole, but instead by perceiving the success of the group as really their own personal triumph. At this point, in the early 1980s, the distinction between achievement motivation and power motivation had been minimized, such that the accumulation of power by leaders could be seen as an achievement in itself, something to be valued by any complex organization. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that managers and executives began to take home an increasingly higher percentage of the rewards for corporate success, part of the trend towards increasing income inequality that started in the mid-1970s and accelerated exponentially in the 1980s and 1990s. The devotion of resources and income to those at the top became increasingly acceptable as power and leadership began to be seen as ends in themselves.²⁶⁰

V. Conclusion

In the early 1980s, with Boyatzis at the helm, McBer was sold to Saatchi & Saatchi, a global advertising agency. Shortly thereafter, in 1984, Saatchi & Saatchi acquired the Hay Group, a multinational management consulting firm. As a combined entity, Hay/McBer had become, by the late 1980s, a global

²⁶⁰ Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014) 20-22, 416-18; Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2007), 75-78.

management consulting firm with revenues of over \$150 million.²⁶¹ This was quite a change for a company that, only two decades prior, had been started as a protest against the conservatism of Harvard's administration, as a way to engage in social action to help struggling businessmen in the Third World.

The Thematic Apperception Test was the rock upon which the house of McBer—and McClelland's career—was built. Although Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan developed the TAT to plumb the depths of human personality, to explore the fantasies of individuals (and dyadic relationships), McClelland turned it into an easy-to-use tool for assessing people's needs and motives in the realm of business. McClelland's shortened TAT protocol (renamed the McBer Picture Story Exercise) was not used to understand the full individual, but instead focused on those needs and motivations that McClelland believed were most important for work: the needs for power, achievement, and affiliation. It should thus come as no surprise that the relationship between Murray and McClelland became increasingly acrimonious during their time together at the DSR: Murray railed against McClelland's "perfunctory, mechanical use of the TAT to make reductionist interpretations," and was furious that his invention, which he had intended to help people in their quest for self-fulfillment, was instead being used to help companies improve their bottom line.²⁶²

Nevertheless, even if the TAT was the technological substrate for McClelland's career, it was his staunch adherence to the project of the postwar

²⁶¹ Kennedy and Burke, *An Analysis of the Management Consulting Business*, 29, 35.

²⁶² Winter, "Toward a Science of Personality Psychology," 142; William McKinley ('Mac') Runyan, conversation with author, August 18, 2014.

behavioral sciences that pushed him to dedicate his psychological research to applied ends. He took the central tenet of the postwar behavioral sciences—that every group was actually a collection of self-maximizing individuals and could be analyzed as such—and turned it on its head, arguing that every ‘body’ could be described as if it were an individual personality, with a particular set of needs, motives, and skills.²⁶³ Corporations and nations thus became conceived as holistic units, with the economic success and growth of the entire entity of paramount importance; as with the intervention in Curacao, conflict between the needs of the parts (individuals) and the needs of the whole (corporation or nation) were minimized and adjusted through psychological intervention.

McClelland’s academic and financial interest in the success of his corporate clients led him to focus on managers and executives, the so-called ‘leaders of men’ that he said created the environment in which growth could occur. Whereas he had originally been interested in small-time entrepreneurs with a high ‘need to achieve,’ he became increasingly enamored with leaders and their need to influence others. McClelland’s interest in power was not only the result of his research, but also a consequence of his self-reflexive turn, trying to understand his and his colleagues’ motivation for helping others in their business endeavors. Conceiving of themselves as archetypal leaders motivated by the need to influence others, it was a short leap to try to develop these characteristics in executives, believing that leaders were the drivers of success in any group.

²⁶³ David C. McClelland, “How Motives, Skills, and Values Determine What People Do,” *American Psychologist* 40, no. 7 (July 1985).

The context for McClelland's transition from an interest in achievement to an interest in power was the broader rehabilitation of the concept of leadership in American society. If the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by a fear of all things authoritarian, the 1970s and 1980s brought charismatic leadership back in vogue, with a bevy of motivational speakers, televangelists, and actor-politicians leading the way. McBer & Company bolstered this trend in the business world, providing management consulting services to corporations as they moved away from large hierarchies and transitioned to leaner, more flexible organizational structures during the postindustrial era. With the trend toward 'de-layering,' firing mid-level professionals and spreading their assignments to remaining employees, there were increasing calls for the types of leaders who could motivate overburdened employees and make them feel more successful, fulfilled, and 'inspired.' As sociologist and historian Rakesh Khurana has documented, the CEO as 'corporate savior' came into favor in the late 1970s as large managerial bureaucracies were blamed for declining productivity.²⁶⁴ McClelland, McBer, and the burgeoning industry of management consulting were integral to this development, convincing executives to accumulate as much power as possible, for the sake of their companies' success and the wellbeing and happiness of their subordinates.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Rakesh Khurana, *Searching for a Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Rakesh Khurana, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 355.

²⁶⁵ Revenue estimates for the management consulting business as a whole show a precipitous rise in the late 1970s and 1980s: the industry brought in \$1 billion in 1970, \$2 billion in 1979, \$3 billion in 1981, \$4 billion in 1985, and \$7 billion in 1986 (Kennedy and Kennedy 1987, 1).

Chapter 4

The Making of Burnout: The Stanford Prison Experiment, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and the Shift from Social Change to Self-Awareness in the Postwar United States, 1967-1991

The human services flourished during the late 1960s and 1970s.²⁶⁶ Free health clinics, halfway houses, crisis hotlines, and consciousness-raising groups proliferated in response to the perceived shortcomings of the medical and social establishments.²⁶⁷ These alternative institutions were premised on the idea that caring for “youth, minorities, women, and others pushed to the margins of the modern economy” could be a path to both self-help and social change.²⁶⁸ As such, they attracted not only the sick, the needy, and the displaced, but also many young, idealistic volunteers and professionals influenced by the counterculture who wanted to help others and in so doing achieve a level of personal satisfaction.

²⁶⁶ In their 1974 study *The Service Society and the Consumer Vanguard*, Alan Gartner and Frank Riessman wrote that the human services included such fields as, “women’s counseling, hotlines, halfway houses, rape counseling, sex therapy, family planning, encounter groups, retirement counseling, special services for the dying, vocational rehabilitation, day care, marriage encounters, abortion counseling, alternative education centers, community schools, peer counseling, and self help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Synanon, Recovery Incorporated, Weight Watchers, human potential groups and so on” (Gartner and Riessman 1974, 18).

²⁶⁷ These shortcomings in medical care were perhaps best encapsulated by a January 1970 editorial in *Fortune* which stated, in part, “Much of U.S. medical care, particularly the everyday business of preventing and treating routine illness, is inferior in quality, wastefully dispensed, and inequitably financed. Medical manpower and facilities are so maldistributed that large segments of the population, especially the urban poor and those in rural areas, get virtually no care at all—even though their illnesses are most numerous and, in a medical sense, often easy to cure” (“It’s Time to Operate,” *Fortune*, January 1970, 79).

²⁶⁸ Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 82; Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Gregory L. Weiss, *Grassroots Medicine: The Story of America’s Free Health Clinics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

However, beginning in the early 1970s, a number of people who worked in these intimate and emotionally charged environments began to complain about becoming ‘burned out.’

Workers in human service institutions and ‘hippie’ free clinics in San Francisco and New York City were the first to be identified as suffering from burnout.²⁶⁹ In 1974, Herbert Freudenberger, a psychoanalyst and former volunteer at the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic in San Francisco, became the first person to describe burnout in print. Although he did not give a precise definition, he described it in numerous places as a work-related syndrome characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion, cynicism about one’s co-workers and clients, inflexibility in thought and action, and decreased efficacy on the job.²⁷⁰ He indicated that free clinic and human service workers were especially vulnerable to burnout because they were “fighting a battle on at least three fronts...contending with the ills of society, with the needs of the individuals who come to us for assistance, and with our own personality needs.”²⁷¹ Having himself burned out in 1971 while setting up a free clinic in New York City, Freudenberger suggested he and his colleagues had been too committed to social change and needed to start protecting themselves by becoming more self-interested.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ ‘Burnout’ and ‘burn-out’ are interchangeable spellings for the topic of this chapter. Except for direct quotations, I will use the term ‘burnout’ which has become the most common spelling.

²⁷⁰ Herbert J. Freudenberger, “Staff Burn-Out,” *Journal of Social Issues* 30, no. 1 (Winter 1974): 159-61; Herbert J. Freudenberger, “The Staff Burn-Out Syndrome in Alternative Institutions,” *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 74.

²⁷¹ Freudenberger, “The Staff Burn-Out Syndrome,” 73.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 73, 82.

This chapter explores the development and proliferation of the burnout concept, focusing on the work of Herbert Freudenberger and University of California, Berkeley social psychologist Christina Maslach. These two most prominent burnout researchers believed the syndrome was caused mainly by chronic emotional arousal, a problem that could only be solved by developing more effective communication strategies, better interpersonal skills, and a renewed commitment to self-awareness. As burned out individuals were said to be either completely unmotivated to do their jobs or stuck in a cycle of trying harder and harder but accomplishing less and less, Freudenberger and Maslach looked to develop strategies to help individuals manage their burnout and thus become more productive and effective workers. By the early 1980s, the fear of burnout—and the attendant focus on the benefits of self-awareness for better communication and increased motivation—escaped the bounds of the human services. Through the efforts of Freudenberger, Maslach, and a number of other popularizers, anyone who “work[ed] with people in some capacity” was seen as susceptible to burnout.²⁷³

This enlarged group of ‘people-workers,’ which included white-collar office workers, entrepreneurs, and corporate executives, represented a large percentage of the American population, considering the service sector employed close to 70

²⁷³ Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, and Michael Leiter, *MBI The Maslach Burnout Inventory: Manual* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1996 [1981]), 4; Wilmar Schaufeli, Michael Leiter, and Christina Maslach, “Burnout: 35 Years of Research and Practice,” *Career Development International* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 206.

percent of the American workforce.²⁷⁴ Burnout's extension from the health and human services into the broader discourse on corporate America pointed to anxieties about how well workers were meeting the demands of a post-industrial society. In order to buoy a business civilization that many saw as in crisis, and to harness a newly diverse and increasingly individualistic workforce, a renewed emphasis was placed on the selection and cultivation of employees with interpersonal skills and the ability to resist stress on the job. Whereas these skills had often been valued in salespeople and those who worked in the human and social services, they became increasingly valued (and assessed) in managers who needed to understand and motivate an expanded and increasingly heterogeneous labor force. Thus, the job of manager was itself redefined as a type of human service role, one in which the goal was to help employees become self-motivated and engage in self-leadership.

Burnout was in many ways the ultimate pathology of a postindustrial, service society. In an economy that depended upon interpersonal interaction, effective communication, and an agreeable demeanor, burnout's symptoms of exhaustion, cynicism, and avoidance were seen as an existential threat to the U.S. way of life in the closing decades of the twentieth century. The solution to this state of affairs was not, however, to modify the dominant institutions in which people spent many of their waking hours, but instead to reinforce (and reinvest in) the self-help techniques and stress reduction measures that could help people

²⁷⁴ Richard Boyatzis, *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance* (New York: Wiley, 1982), 1; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Social Change* (London, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 1990), 157.

continue to communicate and interact with others, join teams, and integrate themselves into organizations in ways that were necessary to the continuing function of American society's postwar status quo. The free clinic and other human service institutions served as models of the intimate, familial organization, one that Freudenberger and Maslach would then map onto much larger corporate entities. The relatively easy-to-use self-help techniques and assessments that they used in their preliminary interventions in the early 1980s would, in time, become ubiquitous in both mass-market self-help books and in the HR practices and wellness seminars of corporate America.

I. From California to New York and Back Again: Herbert Freudenberger, the Free Clinic Movement, and the Origins of Burnout

Dr. David Smith founded the first free clinic, the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, in June 1967 during San Francisco's so-called 'Summer of Love.' Smith started the clinic to provide "free medical, dental, and psychological treatment for members of the 'hippy' community" who were dealing with issues stemming from drug use, unprotected sex, and poor nutrition.²⁷⁵ The free clinic was free not only in the monetary sense, but also in the sense that it was free in every way from establishment medicine: "no probing questions, no 'morality trips, no red tape, no files."²⁷⁶ The Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic was the first of dozens of free clinics to be established across the country during the late 1960s and 1970s in cities such

²⁷⁵ Herbert J. Freudenberger, "The 'Free Clinic' Concept," *International Journal of Offender Therapy* 15, no. 2 (June 1971): 121.

²⁷⁶ David E. Smith, David J. Bentel, and Jerome L. Schwartz, *The Free Clinic: A Community Approach to Health Care and Drug Abuse* (Beloit, WI: Stash Press, 1971), xiv.

as Oakland, Seattle, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and New York.²⁷⁷ As historian Gregory Weiss has noted, many who worked in these free clinics saw them as a “gateway to working for significant change in the overall health care system, so that their focus was on sociopolitical change as well as patient services.”²⁷⁸

The majority of people who worked in the free clinic movement were volunteers without medical or other sorts of official credentials. In addition, many who joined the movement were members of the counterculture interested in helping others with issues resembling their own. For instance, Robert Conrich, the co-founder of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, “envisioned starting a private medical facility that would treat adverse reactions to hallucinogenic drugs” after quitting his job as a private investigator, joining the counterculture, and beginning to take LSD.²⁷⁹ As a result, the lines between professional, volunteer, client, and patient were often quite blurry. These boundaries were made only more porous by the fact that “many self-help groups encourage[d] their members to live in the geographic area of the institution...in an attempt to promote the atmosphere and feeling of ‘family.’”²⁸⁰ Physical and emotional proximity were integral to the ‘one-to-one personal relationship’ that human service professionals tried to cultivate with their clients, especially the countercultural youth who depended on alternative institutions as surrogate families.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Freudenberger, “The ‘Free Clinic’ Concept,” 121; Nelson, *Body and Soul*, 75-84, 112; Weiss, *Grassroots Medicine*, 25.

²⁷⁸ Weiss, *Grassroots Medicine*, 27.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 30; Richard B. Seymour and David E. Smith, *The Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinics: Still Free After All These Years, 1967-1987* (San Francisco: Partisan Press, 1986).

²⁸⁰ Freudenberger, “The Staff Burn-Out Syndrome,” 76.

²⁸¹ Binkley, *Getting Loose*, 83; Alan Gartner and Frank Riessman, *The Service Society and the Consumer Vanguard* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 18.

In the summer of 1968, psychoanalyst Herbert Freudenberger travelled from his home in New York City to the San Francisco Bay Area to lend his services to the nascent free clinic movement. An analyst in private practice as well as an adjunct professor of clinical psychology at New York University, he took a leave of absence to spend the summer in Haight-Ashbury, providing psychological counseling and treatment to the hippie community. A refugee from the Nazi regime in the 1930s, Freudenberger “identified with the ‘flower children,’ imagining great similarities between their plight and the nightmare of [his] childhood in Germany.”²⁸² Their transient lifestyle and search for meaning reminded him of his own search for a safe haven as a 12-year-old boy, having fled his hometown of Frankfurt and stopping in Zurich, Amsterdam, and Paris on the way to his eventual destination of New York City.²⁸³

Freudenberger tried to act like a surrogate parent for his young clients in the free clinic and his young patients in analysis. He assumed this role out of concern for the state of the family in the 1960s. In particular, he was critical of a corporate society in which men spent a majority of their waking hours working outside the home. For Freudenberger, the demands of white-collar work in the postwar era had made men both physically and emotionally distant from their children, unwilling or unable to “make their feelings and thoughts known, and in turn, to pick up the thoughts and feelings of their children.”²⁸⁴ He thus took it

²⁸² Herbert J. Freudenberger and Geraldine Richelson, *Burn-Out: The High Cost of High Achievement* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1980), xx-xxi.

²⁸³ “Herbert Freudenberger,” *American Psychologist* 48, no. 4 (April 1993): 357.

²⁸⁴ Herbert J. Freudenberger, “Treatment and Dynamics of the ‘Disrelated’ Teenager and His Parents in the American Society,” *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1969): 249.

upon himself to parent his clients, curing their ‘emotional deprivation’ and ‘communication deficiencies’ by “spending a great deal of time actually ‘bringing [them] up’ in the use of words and how to communicate.”²⁸⁵

Freudenberger’s thoughts on the matter resonated with the fears about the loss of male authority that pervaded the works of C. Wright Mills, William Whyte, and David Riesman. Ian Nicholson has noted that these authors “gave voice to...a wide and deeply felt anxiety over a masculinity seemingly besieged at every turn” in the 1950s and 1960s; Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) had, for example, “pointed to the ‘demise’ of the strong, self-made, ‘inner-directed’ American ‘character’ and the subsequent rise of a feminized, ‘other-directed’ organization man” who was no longer master of himself or his environment.²⁸⁶ Freudenberger called upon these fears in his critique of the family and social structures of the late 1960s and early 1970s, asking rhetorically whether “juvenile delinquency, street gangs, drop-outs, and the hippie phenomenon can be explained in part as a young man’s venting his anger on society because the reality-and-value giving man had not been available to him in his childhood.”²⁸⁷

As a result, although he found the “treatment of the young difficult” and indicated that they were “extremely demanding of my time, my energies, and my thoughts,” he was committed to creating spaces where young people could find medical and psychological care as well as a substitute family structure.²⁸⁸ Thus,

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 249, 253.

²⁸⁶ Ian Nicholson, “‘Shocking’ Masculinity: Stanley Milgram, ‘Obedience to Authority,’ and the ‘Crisis of Manhood’ in Cold War America,” *Isis* 102, no. 2 (June 2011): 247.

²⁸⁷ Herbert J. Freudenberger, “The Case of the Missing Male Authority,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 9, no. 1 (January 1970): 43.

²⁸⁸ Freudenberger, “Disrelated Teenager,” 253.

soon after returning from Northern California in 1968, he started to work on setting up a free health clinic in New York City. The St. Mark's Free Clinic opened in January 1970 in the East Village, at the time the epicenter of the counterculture in New York. From 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., 5 nights a week, he and his staff would provide medical, therapeutic, and counseling services to a mostly young, often transient clientele.²⁸⁹ After the clinic opened, Freudenberger would run his private practice uptown from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., travel downtown to work at the clinic until 11 p.m., and then hold staff meetings and training sessions until 1 or 2 a.m. before heading home each night.²⁹⁰ As director of psychological services, he "had to become aware of the needs and problems of the many young people coming in," such that he found it hard to leave the clinic at night because "there was just too much to do."²⁹¹ After more than a year of working 16-hour days, meeting one-on-one with patients in independent analysis during the day and spending his nights at the free clinic treating clients and training volunteers, Freudenberger experienced a complete breakdown. He "found [himself] in a state of physical exhaustion, too tired [even] to go on vacation with [his] family, [and] easily irritated," such that he had to temporarily "leave the free clinic entirely in order to get [himself] together again."²⁹²

Upon returning to the clinic a month later, he noticed that his particular set of symptoms—exhaustion, cynicism, rigidity, and a loss of efficacy—was common among those who worked in free clinics and other alternative

²⁸⁹ Freudenberger, "The 'Free Clinic' Concept," 121.

²⁹⁰ Freudenberger and Richelson, *Burn-Out*, xviii.

²⁹¹ Freudenberger, "The Staff Burn-Out Syndrome," 78.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

institutions. Although he recognized that his long hours had contributed to his problems, Freudenberger did not believe this was the primary cause of his breakdown. Instead, he blamed it on being overly dedicated to helping other people, insisting that “the population which we help is often in extreme need, and because of this they continually take, suck, demand...requir[ing] continuous giving on our part.”²⁹³ The result was a depletion of emotional and physical energy: because human service workers were “the dedicated and the committed” who “feel a pressure from within to work and help and feel a pressure from the outside to give,” they were developing a condition that Freudenberger and his colleagues began to refer to as ‘burn-out.’²⁹⁴

Burnout has since entered the general lexicon as another name for stress caused by overwork. Nevertheless, as Mark Jackson elucidates in his book *The Age of Stress*, the modern stress concept has been informed by fears of overwork and occupational hazards since its ‘discovery’ in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.²⁹⁵ Indeed, both Jackson and Dana Becker have noted how stress, its antecedents, and its allied conditions have often been associated with certain types of workers (e.g., neurasthenia with intellectuals, or PTSD with soldiers). These scholars also show how the concept of stress solidified in the middle decades of the 20th century as Claude Bernard and Walter Cannon’s work on

²⁹³ Ibid, 75.

²⁹⁴ Freudenberger, “Staff Burn-Out,” 159, 161.

²⁹⁵ Mark Jackson, *The Age of Stress: Science and the Search for Stability* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); Eric Oosenbrug, “Review of *The Age of Stress* and *One Nation Under Stress*,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 51, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 103.

homeostasis became the foundation for physiological and hormonal studies of stress in the 1930s and 1940s.

The incorporation of burnout into the stress paradigm in the early 1980s demonstrates just how fluid the stress concept continued to be after its popularization by endocrinologist Hans Selye in the 1950s. Although originally rooted in studies of physiological and hormonal adaptation to the environment, the postwar popularity of stress was due in large part to the emergence of psychological understandings of stress. This trend was bolstered by the contemporary emphasis on self-help and humanistic psychology, which worked to convince individuals that stress could be managed with new types of coping mechanisms, affirmations, and assertiveness training (in addition to psychoactive drugs). These techniques helped individuals adapt intellectually and emotionally to an increasingly complex, organized industrial society. Although Freudenberger and Maslach did not originally place their work within the stress paradigm, by the early 1980s both asserted that burnout was a type of job stress. Indeed, although they originally saw burnout as a competing concept, one that focused more on the interpersonal and environmental causes of exhaustion and cynicism, their increasingly individualistic style of self-help rhetoric brought burnout into the stress paradigm and helped popularize burnout as a synonym for job stress from the 1980s on.

In the early 1970s, however, Freudenberger and other human service providers used the term as a way of pointing to their over-commitment to society's neediest members. This over-commitment, Freudenberger insisted,

caused professional helpers to develop problems that mimicked those of their clients. Thus, he noted that the therapist “who is working among drug addicts...become[s] something of a con man as he ‘requisitions’ pills from the institution’s pharmacy and doctors.”²⁹⁶ Indeed, the term ‘burnout’ was borrowed from “the illicit drug scene where it colloquially referred to the devastating effect of chronic drug use.”²⁹⁷ Similarly, much like the therapist who worked with drug users, Freudenberger wrote that the “risk-taking behavior in counseling with speed freaks, psychotics, homicidal people and other paranoids sometimes borders on the lunatic,” as if by becoming too familiar with their clients, the staff were imitating their thoughts and actions.²⁹⁸

The burnout syndrome pointed not only to the pathologies of emotional interaction, but also the pathologies of the environment. Just as the intimate space of the free clinic might lead to burnout, so too could decaying surroundings lead to feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. To wit, the East Village neighborhood itself was ‘burning out’ at the time, impacting those who lived there in devastating ways.²⁹⁹ During the 1960s, many of the older Italian and Jewish immigrants who had called the neighborhood home for decades were dying or moving away. As a younger generation of mostly Puerto Rican immigrants moved into the neighborhood, both the New York City government and real estate developers stopped investing in the area, and in some cases

²⁹⁶ Freudenberger, “The Staff Burn-Out Syndrome,” 79.

²⁹⁷ Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach, “Burnout,” 205.

²⁹⁸ Freudenberger, “Staff Burn-Out,” 160-61.

²⁹⁹ Christopher Mele, “Neighborhood ‘Burn-out’: Puerto Ricans at the End of the Queue,” in *From Urban Village to East Village: The Battle for New York’s Lower East Side*, ed. Janet L. Abu-Lughod (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994): 127-31.

abandoned their properties entirely.³⁰⁰ The result was that, by the early 1970s, the neighborhood had become a shell of its former self. Compounded by a dearth of semi-skilled jobs for new immigrants, the build environment of the East Village was burning out and rubbing off on its residents. This included the many countercultural youth who lived in the disused buildings as well as the volunteers who were encouraged to live in the neighborhood as well.³⁰¹ The structural decline of the East Village had thus translated into the psychological burnout of those associated with the St. Mark's Free Clinic.

It is not clear whether Freudenberger himself coined the term 'burnout' or whether he was merely the first person to delineate a concept that human service workers had already begun to use. In either case, Freudenberger's writings lent legitimacy to the idea and promoted the use of the term within the human services. From his first article on burnout in 1974 until the publication of his first mass-market book in 1980, Freudenberger wrote about the syndrome mainly in clinical journals and others aimed at caring professionals (e.g., the *Journal of Drug Issues* and *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*). As a result, burnout may not have gained widespread recognition as quickly as it did were it not for the work of University of California, Berkeley social psychologist Christina Maslach, who looked to expand its relevance beyond psychoanalysis and the counterculture. Writing in scholarly journals, professional publications, and

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

popular magazines, Maslach turned burnout from a relatively obscure syndrome into one with which many people could identify.

II. The Impact of the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) on Burnout Research: Christina Maslach, Philip Zimbardo, and the Nexus of Social and Personality Psychology between Berkeley and Stanford

In 1973, Christina Maslach and researcher Ayala Pines began a number of studies in which they tried to understand how professional helpers dealt with the emotional impact of their clients on their own mental health. They found that their subject group, consisting of more than 200 social welfare workers, psychiatric nurses, poverty lawyers, prison personnel, and childcare workers, tried to moderate their emotional arousal by engaging in ‘detached concern.’ Maslach and Pines defined detached concern (somewhat tautologically) as an attempt to “balance...the handling of clients in a more objective, detached way” while “maintaining a real human concern for them.”³⁰² These professional helpers noted, however, that detached concern was often unattainable, and that the techniques they used to keep their clients at a distance often led them to “lose all concern...for the persons they work[ed] with” such that they “treat[ed] them in detached or even dehumanized ways.”³⁰³ Maslach and Pines also noticed that, during the three years of their initial study (1973-5), many of their subjects began to use the term ‘burnout’ to describe their negative feelings about clients and emotional exhaustion at work.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Ayala Pines and Christina Maslach, “Characteristics of Staff Burnout in Mental Health Settings,” *Hospital & Community Psychiatry* 29, no. 4 (April 1978): 233.

³⁰³ Christina Maslach, “Burned-Out,” *Human Behavior* 5, no. 9 (September 1976): 16.

³⁰⁴ Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach, “Burnout,” 205-06.

For Maslach, the dehumanization of clients by those who were ostensibly supposed to serve them was exactly what this research had been set up to uncover. The impetus for the study had been Maslach's involvement with the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) in August 1971, and specifically her observation of the mock prison guards in the experiment. In summary, the SPE was designed by Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo to study the "interpersonal dynamics in a prison environment...in which subjects role-played prisoners and guards for an extended period of time."³⁰⁵ There were 21 college-aged males who were selected to roleplay guards and prisoners in a mock prison erected in the basement of the Stanford psychology department. Out of the 75 individuals who responded to the call to participate in the two-week experiment, the 21 who were chosen were considered to be, on the basis of questionnaires, interviews, and personality tests, the "most stable (physically and emotionally), most mature, and least involved in anti-social behavior."³⁰⁶

Zimbardo and his graduate student colleagues, Craig Haney and Curtis Banks, wanted to know how the social and interpersonal environment of the prison affected the behavior of those who lived and worked inside its walls. Would the mock prisoners and guards exhibit pathological or otherwise unusual behavior during the experiment, or would they remain stable, mature, and sociable even under adverse circumstances? The first serious indication that the prison environment was having a negative effect on the experiment's participants

³⁰⁵ C. Haney, W.C. Banks, and P.G. Zimbardo, "Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison," *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* 1, no. 1 (February 1973): 69.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

was when one of the mock prisoners, Doug-8612, had to be removed from the experiment after 36 hours because of “extreme stress reactions of crying, screaming, cursing, and irrational actions” after attempting to lead a failed ‘prisoner rebellion.’³⁰⁷ The researchers initially suspected that there had been a flaw in their screening process and that Doug may have had a personality defect that accounted for his inability to adapt to the simulated prison. Only upon reflection after the experiment did they come to believe that Doug’s breakdown revealed more about the pathological nature of the prison environment than it did anything about his personality. As Haney has noted, “It was only later that we appreciated this obvious irony: we had ‘dispositionally explained’ the first truly unexpected and extraordinary demonstration of situational power in our study by resorting precisely to the kind of thinking we had designed the study to challenge.”³⁰⁸

Maslach’s involvement with the SPE would come after Doug’s breakdown, when Zimbardo asked her to conduct interviews with the participants at the halfway point of the originally two-week experiment. Months earlier, Maslach had received her doctorate in psychology at Stanford under Zimbardo’s tutelage, and had also become involved in a romantic relationship with him. Maslach had not been part of designing the experiment, however, nor had she participated in the first days of the simulation, from Saturday the 14th to Wednesday the 18th of

³⁰⁷ Philip G. Zimbardo, Christina Maslach, and Craig Haney, “Reflections on the Stanford Prison Experiment: Genesis, Transformations, Consequences,” in *Obedience to Authority: Current Perspectives on the Milgram Paradigm*, edited by Thomas Blass (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000): 199.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 219; Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2007), 210.

August. On the 19th, the night before her interviews were to be conducted, she decided to visit the prison to become familiar with the environment and observe the participants. While there, she had a conversation with one of the guards waiting to start his shift, a man she described as “very pleasant, polite and friendly, surely a person anyone would consider a really nice guy.”³⁰⁹ However, once his shift had started, it became clear that he was the “meanest and toughest” guard in the simulation, the so-called ‘John Wayne’ guard who would “go out of his way to be rude and belligerent,” “yelling and cursing at the prisoners.”³¹⁰ While watching this situation unfold, not only was Maslach surprised by the change she had witnessed in ‘John Wayne,’ but she was also disturbed that Zimbardo, a man who was normally “gentle and sensitive to the needs of others,” was not upset by the treatment the prisoners were receiving.³¹¹ After hours of arguing about the ethics of the experiment, Zimbardo agreed to stop the simulation early the next morning, having come to the realization that he and his colleagues had “internalized a set of destructive prison values that had distanced themselves from their own humanitarian values.”³¹²

The prison environment and the standard human service institution might not seem comparable. And yet, the lesson that Maslach took away from the SPE was that caring and sociable people, such as ‘John Wayne’ and her husband-to-be Zimbardo, could easily dehumanize those who depended on them for assistance. Although prison guards may not have been called on, then or now, to care for

³⁰⁹ Zimbardo, Maslach, and Haney, “Reflections on the Stanford Prison Experiment,” 209.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid, 210.

³¹² Ibid.

their clients in the same way as social workers or nurses, the prison experiment demonstrated to Maslach that situational and interpersonal stress in intimate environments could stifle anyone's humanistic inclinations. Thus, in her subsequent research with caring professionals, she focused her gaze on how such environments and the relationships that formed within them caused workers to dehumanize their clients. And, as previously mentioned, she borrowed the term 'burnout' from her subjects who used the term to describe their feelings of exhaustion and contempt for clients, a state Maslach believed resulted from chronic emotional arousal.³¹³

The first publication to emerge from Maslach's research with professional helpers in the San Francisco Bay Area was an article titled 'Burned-Out,' published in the September 1976 issue of the popular social science magazine *Human Behavior*. Reprinted in the *Washington Post* and various other news outlets, Maslach's article argued that being "intimately involved with troubled human beings" over an extended period of time led to burnout, such that its causes were "located not in the permanent traits of the people involved, but in certain specific social and situational factors."³¹⁴ This conclusion resembled those of the SPE, in which Doug-8612's breakdown and John Wayne's aggression were said to have resulted not from their personalities but from the prison environment. The irony of this claim, however, was that by supposing a flexible type of personhood, burnout remedies could focus on changing the individual,

³¹³ Maslach, "Burned-Out," 16.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*, 16, 22.

even though burnout's causes were said to be social or situational. And indeed, Maslach's proposed interventions did not focus on modifying the structure of the human services, but instead highlighted the ways that individual workers could reduce their emotional arousal, either by taking temporary 'time outs' from the institution or engaging in administrative work for part of the day.³¹⁵

Instead of focusing on broader social interventions that might have reduced the prison population, or trying to identify the social determinants of drug use or mental illness, Maslach's 'social' psychology focused on ways to protect service workers by erecting emotional and physical barriers between them and their clients. This type of 'social change' was, of course, quite different from the social change that countercultural figures had been calling for in the mid-1960s when they started the alternative health movement. Maslach clearly believed her research on the social and situational determinants of behavior was a rejoinder to the seemingly conservative idea of fixed personality traits during the reinvigorated 'person-situation debate' of the 1970s and 1980s.³¹⁶ However, even this flexible, situationally contingent notion of behavior did not preclude criticizing individuals for their actions. In this case, it was the clients of the human services who were often disparaged, while human service workers were urged to find individual solutions to deal with the 'environmental' problems indigenous to their workplaces.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 20.

³¹⁶ The person-situation controversy concerned the question of whether stable personality traits or situational factors are more influential in determining a person's behavior. The debate was reignited after the publication of Stanford psychology professor Walter Mischel's *Personality and Assessment* (1968), in which he persuasively argued that behavior was too cross-situationally inconsistent to be understood by appeals to personality traits.

This uneasy combination of blaming the environment (read: clients) for burnout and looking for individual solutions to the problem was on display in Maslach's 1978 article "The Client Role in Staff Burn-Out." Maslach began the piece by noting that "clients can dehumanize staff just as staff can dehumanize them" but that "changes in the structure of the staff-client interaction and changes in client expectations about staff can alleviate staff burn-out."³¹⁷ Thus, Maslach proposed that staff members should correct the "unrealistic ideas about the extent of personal growth and caring [clients] can legitimately expect," since "[n]o such history of personal caring exists with strangers to whom one turns for aid."³¹⁸ This claim, however, was false: the human services explicitly were designed as surrogate family structures for marginalized individuals and members of the counterculture. Fearful that these intimate spaces had inspired "passivity and dependence" on the part of the client, a result which the "staff themselves had done much to encourage," Maslach focused on how staff members could moderate clients' expectations of them, and how they could similarly reduce their own expectations of their clients and the institution.³¹⁹

Maslach published numerous articles about burnout in the mid-to-late 1970s, often in professional journals or popular magazines (e.g., *Barrister*, *Public Welfare*, and *Psychology Today*). Although she almost always started these pieces by noting rhetorically that social, situational, and environmental factors were the primary cause of burnout, she almost exclusively provided self-help

³¹⁷ Christina Maslach, "The Client Role in Staff Burn-Out," *Journal of Social Issues* 34, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 111.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

advice to professionals on how they could modify their own perceptions of their co-workers and clients in order to reduce the risk of burning out. As Elizabeth Siegel Watkins has noted with regards to the topic of stress in the 1970s, most interventions focused on how individuals could change themselves in order to cope with stress or control their response to it.³²⁰ In line with this, Maslach and Pines suggested that mental health workers should, for example, come to work expecting “a mundane and uneventful job that lacks opportunity for self-expression,” and that they could find some relief by “chang[ing] some of their focus from the patients to themselves.”³²¹ While noting that this may have seemed foreign to the cherished ideals of the helping professions, they wrote that “focusing only on the patient is self-defeating both for staff members and for patients and may contribute to the process of burnout.”³²² In this way, Maslach and Pines reinforced the notion that self-interestedness was not only suitable, but perhaps an even more effective way of helping others than engaging in more demanding forms of social change.

III. Putting Critique to Work: Sociological Theory and the Rise of Humanistic Management and Popular Management Literature

The increasing popularity of the topic of burnout in the 1970s must be understood, in part, as a reaction to managerial capitalism and the fears of mass society that pervaded the postwar era. As business historian Alfred Chandler

³²⁰ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, “Stress and the American Vernacular: Popular Perceptions of Disease Causality,” in *Stress, Shock, and Adaptation in the Twentieth Century*, eds. David Cantor and Edmund Ramsden (Rochester, NY: Rochester University Press, 2014): 64.

³²¹ Pines and Maslach, “Characteristics of Staff Burnout,” 237.

³²² *Ibid.*

wrote in his 1977 book *The Visible Hand*, the management profession emerged at the start of the twentieth century to provide stability and growth for newly emerging large corporations. As companies grew, managerial hierarchies also expanded, becoming increasingly more technical and acquiring a large degree of independence from their small groups of owners. The ‘visible hand’ of management, preferring long-term stability to short-term profits, helped large corporations dominate an increasing number of sectors of the American economy.³²³

It was in this context that C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, and William Whyte wrote their jeremiads lamenting the rise of the ‘organization man’ and the increasing homogenization of middle-class life in America. In the 1950s and 1960s, these authors and others wrote scathing critiques of the shift from entrepreneurship and independent enterprise to the ‘bureaucratic rationality’ of big business.³²⁴ Despite the fact that many Americans still clung to an ethos of individualism, such tools as personality tests and even consumerism itself were seen to be making mass society inevitable, aiding in the “vain quest for a utopian equilibrium” and the “soft-minded denial that there is a conflict between the individual and society.”³²⁵

However, at the end of the 1960s, and certainly by the 1970s this view of the power and homogeneity of white-collar management started to change.

³²³ Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1977).

³²⁴ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 77-86.

³²⁵ William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 116, 36.

Millions of newly college-educated workers (many of them women and minorities) started to enter the labor force. Spurred on by social movements emphasizing the rights of marginalized groups to live and work as equals in America, and also by new laws enacted to protect women and minorities from discrimination in the workplace, the staid corporate structure that had existed since the end of World War II started to crack.³²⁶ Management thus faced a new set of pressures. On the one hand, they needed to find ways of integrating a large and diverse group of workers into the corporate structures of American capitalism. On the other hand, women and minorities were increasingly *becoming* lower and middle managers in America's companies, despite the continued existence of a 'glass ceiling' that kept many from reaching the highest rungs of the corporate ladder. In order to ensure the productivity of this expanded and newly diverse workforce, an emphasis was placed on the selection and cultivation of employees with 'interpersonal skills' and the ability to resist stress on the job.

The apparent transition from a hierarchical corporate structure to the so-called 'flexible firm' during the 1970s meant that an increasing number of responsibilities were placed on these new lower and middle level managers. As profits (and wages) stagnated and an increasing number of college-educated baby boomers entered the workforce with anti-authoritarian views and a penchant for

³²⁶ For some excellent works on the social, political, and economic context of the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993); Andreas Killen's *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007); and Bruce J. Schulman's *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002).

self-development, white-collar workers were increasingly obliged to manage themselves for their own benefit and the benefit of the company. In such an environment, humanistic management, with its roots in the self-actualization theories of Abraham Maslow, became an increasingly popular and widespread management philosophy.

Most theorists of participative or humanistic management looked for the best ways to integrate the needs of the individuals with the goals of the organization.³²⁷ In their estimation, the best way of achieving this was for managers to develop ‘self-awareness’ of their own personalities; as well-known business theorist Chris Argyris stated, “it is impossible to understand others unless we understand ourselves and we cannot understand ourselves unless we understand others.”³²⁸ These ideas, bubbling up from the works of Argyris, University of Michigan organizational psychologist Rensis Likert, and Abraham Maslow in his book *Eupsychian Management*, found their most popular expression in Douglas McGregor’s 1960 book *The Human Side of Enterprise*, perhaps the landmark text of the humanistic management movement. In this work, McGregor espoused his ‘Theory Y’ of management, which had as its core principle the attainment of “that degree of integration in which the individual can achieve his goals *best* by directing his efforts toward the success of the organization.”³²⁹

³²⁷ Of course, in many ways, individual-organizational fit was the same goal that Elton Mayo and Fritz Roethlisberger had in their research at the Hawthorne Works in the 1920s and 1930s.

³²⁸ Chris Argyris, *Personality and Organization: The Conflict Between System and the Individual* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 6.

³²⁹ Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill 2006 [1960]), 75.

A professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management, McGregor and his followers insisted that Theory Y was a revolutionary idea, one that would not be readily accepted by workers or other scholars. This was a bit of false modesty, as it not only resonated with the popular humanistic psychology McGregor drew so heavily upon, but also meshed with the functionalist and systems theories that were prominent in the postwar social sciences. Nevertheless, while McGregor insisted that laborers would probably be hostile to his ideas, he proposed that “a number of applications of Theory Y *in managing managers and professional people* are possible today.”³³⁰ For McGregor and the other theorists of humanistic management, this attempt to ‘manage managers’ was seen as the first step toward the integration of all workers with the organization, as the “development of management by integration and self-control begins with an individual who develops his own strategy...Soon, his subordinates are following his example.”³³¹

Although these ideas gained traction during the 1960s, it was the flood of new groups of people into the corporate workplace at the end of the decade that precipitated their eventual public acceptance. Robert Townsend, acolyte of Douglas McGregor and former CEO of Avis Rent a Car, gave Theory Y nationwide appeal with the publication of his bestselling 1970 book *Up the Organization*. As one of his friends and colleagues Bob Davids recalls, Townsend was “adamant that leaders can’t motivate anyone—they can only create the environment where

³³⁰ Ibid, 74.

³³¹ Ibid, 102.

individuals motivate themselves.”³³² Tying the role of leadership to the promotion of self-motivation, Townsend’s work became quite popular in the 1970s as the widespread interest in self-development melded with the goal of integration in American business. Townsend, McGregor, and Theory Y entered the mainstream of the management world at the same time that personality tests and other forms of psychometric assessment reemerged in human resources management after two decades of relative stagnancy.³³³ Influenced by the countercultural emphasis on self-understanding, many new workers saw the use of personality tests as the organization’s new humanistic attempt to become more aware of, and responsive to, its employees’ needs, wants, and desires, instead of what an earlier generation of critics had argued were efforts to manipulate workers’ personalities for the sake of profits and to make the job of management easier.

As “the well-spring of nearly every element of the corporate ideology,” giving “businesspeople their jargon, their concerns, [and] their personal aspirations,” the popular management literature of the last four decades has focused much of its energy on the importance of leaders and the devastating

³³² Bob Davids, “How Robert Townsend Talked Me out of Getting an MBA,” in *Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits*, written by Robert Townsend (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007 [1970]), xvii.

³³³ For more on the resurgence of personality testing and workplace assessment in the 1970s, see William C. Byham’s “Applications of the Assessment Center Method,” in *Applying the Assessment Center Method*, eds. Joseph L. Moses and William C. Byham (New York: Pergamon, 1977), 31-44. Sanford Jacoby also notes that, with regards to attitude surveying, its “popularity did level off after the mid-1950s, but recaptured interest in the early 1970s, and today it is more prevalent than ever before, especially in large nonunion companies.” Sanford M. Jacoby, “Employee Attitude Testing at Sears, Roebuck, and Company, 1938-1960,” *The Business History Review* 60, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 603.

consequences of ineffective or uncharismatic leadership.³³⁴ Reflecting the increasingly orthodox notion that bureaucracy was stifling not only for individuals, but also for corporations and profits, Harvard Business School professor Abraham Zaleznik published an article in 1977 arguing that businesses needed to train more ‘leaders’ and fewer ‘managers.’ Zaleznik took to task the managerial viewpoint that had been espoused by such midcentury luminaries as Alfred P. Sloan, Jr. and Pierre du Pont, the two foremost designers of the postwar corporate structure.³³⁵ Ensclosed in that line of thought popularized by Abraham Maslow and Douglas McGregor in the 1960s and reinvigorated by Robert Townsend in the 1970s, Zaleznik’s denunciation of the ‘cult of the group’ and call for ‘personality’ and ‘individualism’ in business were well-received by readers of *Harvard Business Review*, so much so that it often considered the most influential article ever published in *HBR*. Sociologist Rakesh Khurana notes that “Zaleznik’s resuscitation of the Weberian notion of charismatic leadership...found a receptive audience in the economic environment of the late 1970s, when managerialism had come to be blamed for the poor performance of American corporations.³³⁶

Although seemingly a call for individuality in the face of bureaucracy, Zaleznik’s goal was in fact to reinvigorate the corporate hierarchy by establishing

³³⁴ Thomas Frank, *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy* (New York: Anchor, 2001), 173.

³³⁵ Abraham Zaleznik, “Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?,” *Harvard Business Review* 55, no. 3 (May/June 1977): 68-70.

³³⁶ Rakesh Khurana, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 355.

mentoring relationships between senior executives and the most promising junior employees. As leadership was something that needed to be cultivated, Zaleznik called for fostering a 'culture of elitism,' one that would "arise out of the desire to identify talent and other qualities suggestive of the ability to lead."³³⁷ Of course, for those chosen to lead, this new corporate emphasis seemed both like an affirmation of their individuality and a recognition of their skills. In addition, leadership looked like a remedy for burnout because it put executives above the demands of 'people-work:' their vision and charisma could substitute for the interpersonal skills and emotional demands that had become increasingly important to management. However, for every person chosen to lead, a much larger number were forced to take on the responsibilities that they had been left behind. Thus, for the vast majority of people in management roles, the job increasingly took on the trappings of a service role, and the problem of burnout became that much more relevant to the experience of the middle manager.

Harvard Business School professor Harry Levinson noted as much in his 1981 article, "When Executives Burn Out." He said that the "manager must cope with the least capable among the employees, with the depressed, the suspicious, the rivalrous, the self-centered, and the generally unhappy," and that he or she "must balance these conflicting personalities and create from them a motivated work group."³³⁸ Levinson saw the frustration of managing people, when carried to extremes, as the root of the burnout phenomenon. This, however, had become

³³⁷ Zaleznik, "Managers and Leaders," 77.

³³⁸ Harry Levinson, "When Executives Burn Out," *Harvard Business Review* 59, no. 3 (May/June 1981): 77.

the norm for many, as “participative management, quality of work life efforts, and matrix structures all result in a proliferation of the number of people that a manager confronts face to face.”³³⁹ In 1981, Levinson said that the increasing experience of burnout among managers should be a call to change the structure of American management. In this plea, he echoed the early Freudenberger, who saw burnout as a critique of a bureaucratic society that did not respect its individual members or account for their unique needs. However, as the 1970s morphed into the 1980s, the flavor of burnout changed from liberal to neoliberal, from a plea for respecting individual differences to a call for personal responsibility. Every manager was told to act more like a leader, but few were given the power that went with that role. The remaining managers, told to think of themselves as leaders but given more responsibility and less power than top-level executives, found their feelings of exhaustion and inefficacy turned into cases of burnout.

IV. Burnout Goes Mainstream: The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Management of the Individual in a Postindustrial Service Society

Maslach and Freudenberger found a number of ways to expand their purview beyond the human services and into corporate America. By the early 1980s, the ‘service society ethos’ with its ‘greater sensitivity to issues relating to personal existence and style of life’ had filtered into the broader world of work, and the problem of burnout migrated along with it.³⁴⁰ For example, an interview

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Binkley, *Getting Loose*, 83.

with Christina Maslach formed the core of an article titled “Burn Out: When You Can’t Do Your Job—And Don’t Know Why,” in the January 1980 issue of *BankAmerican* magazine, the Bank of America employee magazine. The author quoted Maslach as saying that “people react differently to the same work situation” such that burnout is triggered by individual factors such as a “lack of work fulfillment rather than such external factors as salary or environment.”³⁴¹ Indicating that burnout was on the rise because of a “growing shift from the work ethic to the ‘worth’ ethic in which “people expect more personal fulfillment from their job than ever before,” the author told Bank of America’s employees to keep popular stress researcher Hans Selye’s dictum in mind: “The crucial thing is not so much what happens to you, but the way you react to it.”³⁴²

Followed by the article “Six Unidentified BankAmericans Talk Frankly About Burn Out,” these pieces provide a glimpse into the way one of America’s largest corporations tried to address the growing problem of burnout in the early 1980s. This second article included bold-type quotes from employees stating such things as, “I brought a lot of agony on myself,” “It’s basically me,” and “When they said I’d be fired, I snapped right out of it.”³⁴³ The focus on the individual employee as both cause of, and solution to, his or her own feelings of burnout was indicative of the broader corporate trend of shifting risks and responsibilities

³⁴¹ Rebecca Radner, “Burn Out: When You Can’t Do Your Job—And Don’t Know Why,” *BankAmerican* (January 1980): 3.

³⁴² *Ibid*, 4.

³⁴³ Rebecca Radner, “Six Unidentified BankAmericans Talk Frankly About Burn Out,” *BankAmerican* (January 1980): 5-7.

onto employees, one that had been ongoing since the early 1970s.³⁴⁴ It also exemplified individualizing trends in stress research, which increasingly emphasized combating the problem through the modification of a person's perception (or 'cognitive appraisal') of the environment.³⁴⁵

The individualizing trends in burnout research—much like that of stress—were reinforced by the creation of a number of self-help books, self-report inventories, and questionnaires by Freudenberger and Maslach. For example, Freudenberger and Richelson published a mass-market, self-help book in 1980 titled *Burn-Out: The High Cost of High Achievement*. The book was marketed to a general audience, especially those white-collar employees who worked with people on a daily basis. Like Maslach, Freudenberger emphasized that the individual could rely only on himself or herself to remedy burnout, even if the problem originated with society or the institution. Thus, he insisted that while “we can't always change the structure” of work, which often “sets people up for frustration and despair,” it is frequently the case that we “can do a lot about the way we react to it.”³⁴⁶ The proper way of reacting to work and society, Freudenberger suggested, was to engage in self-awareness and self-protection. To aid in that quest, Freudenberger included in the book a 15-question survey that asked people to consider changes in themselves or in the world around them.

³⁴⁴ Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in the 20th Century* (New York: Psychology Press, 2004), 6-7, 220-23; Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

³⁴⁵ Carroll E. Izard, *Human Emotions* (New York: Plenum Press, 1977); Richard S. Lazarus, *Patterns of Adjustment* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976 [1968]); Hans Selye, *Stress Without Distress* (New York: Signet, 1975 [1974]).

³⁴⁶ Freudenberger and Richelson, *Burn-Out*, 148.

Reprinted in publications such as *Nation's Business*, the magazine of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the 'Freudenberger Burnout Scale' asked generic questions such as "Is joy elusive?" "Does sex seem like more trouble than it's worth?" and "Are you too busy to do even routine things like making phone calls, reading reports, or sending out Christmas cards?"³⁴⁷ Such broad questions about work and life, found under the heading of a burnout questionnaire, cemented the idea that burnout was something that anyone could experience, that self-assessment and self-monitoring were the first step in remedying the problem, and that change was more likely to come from self-modification than it was from advocating social or institutional change.

In the conclusion to *Burn-Out*, Freudenberger made these points explicit. He advised his readers that the "single biggest gift we can give ourselves during our lifetime" is "a quiet, readily-available commodity known as self-awareness."³⁴⁸ He also argued that, instead of raging fruitlessly against society or the organization, we should instead "strengthen ourselves...by learning to acknowledge that the world is the way it is and accepting that fact as one of the conditions we have to live with."³⁴⁹ The effect this had was to forward the notion that while organized, industrial society was the cause of frustration, exhaustion, and burnout, the solution could be found only in the individual, through practices of self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-modification. Freudenberger called

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 17-18.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 204.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

on his readers to stop agitating for social change, and instead find fulfillment through changing their perception of the environment.

Like Freudenberger, Christina Maslach also created a burnout assessment to help people identify and manage their risk of burning out. However, unlike the more rudimentary Freudenberger Burnout Scale, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was the product of years of psychological research and analysis by Maslach and her colleague Susan Jackson. It was based on studies of police officers, teachers, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, and psychologists. Maslach and Jackson created the 22-item inventory to measure three hypothesized aspects of the burnout syndrome: (1) emotional exhaustion, (2) depersonalization, and (3) lack of personal accomplishment. Three representative items from the original MBI were: “Working with people directly puts too much stress on me,” “I’ve become more callous towards people since I took this job,” and “I feel frustrated by my job.” Rating each item on two scales for frequency of occurrence and intensity of feeling, responses to the 22 statements were compared with a theoretical norm for each of the three aspects of burnout. A test-taker would then receive a score of low, medium, or high burnout on each of the three subscales.

Maslach and Jackson asserted that “No special qualifications or procedures are required of the examiner who is administering the MBI,” although they noted that this person “should *not* be a supervisor or administrator who has some direct authority over the respondents because this could cause respondents

to be less candid in their answers.”³⁵⁰ In most cases, it seems, employees and research subjects self-administered the test and were asked to return their inventories to the HR office or by mail. Maslach and Jackson thus tried to serve both the interests of the individuals who took the test, and the prerogatives of the institutions that distributed it. Although test-takers would hopefully feel more comfortable and secure, this arrangement also rendered invisible the power differential between those who took the tests and those who used the data, either for the creation of an individual personnel file or the study of the organization as a whole. Continuing to straddle the line between individual and organizational benefit, the test was supposed to take little time to complete (20-30 minutes), and group scores could be “treated as aggregate data” to be “correlated with other information obtained from respondents, such as demographic data, job characteristics, job performance, personality or attitude measures, and health information.”³⁵¹

The Maslach Burnout Inventory has been, by far, the most popular instrument for social and organizational psychologists to assess burnout in various occupational settings. In part this is because the test’s availability and ease of use *made* burnout a more widespread topic of interest among clinical psychologists, management theorists, and human resources professionals. Between 1981 and 1996, of the 963 dissertations written about burnout, 626 of them used a psychometric test to assess burnout, and the MBI was the tool of

³⁵⁰ Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, “The Measurement of Experienced Burnout,” *Journal of Occupational Behavior* 2, no. 2 (April 1981): 3.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

choice in 91% of those studies. In addition, during the same time period, an average of over 200 journal articles and other types of literature were written about burnout every year, and 93% of those articles that were based on research using a burnout measure used the MBI.³⁵²

The MBI also became the psychometric test of choice for measuring burnout in the 1980s because it could conceivably identify burned out staff members who posed a danger to the continued health and productivity of their company or organization. In fact, the way the MBI is constructed ensures that every person who takes the test can be seen as a possible threat to herself and her company, and thus in need of self-monitoring or treatment. As Maslach and Jackson state, “Burnout is conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate to high degrees of experienced feeling. It is *not* viewed as a dichotomous variable, which is either present or absent.”³⁵³ Although ostensibly a measure of experienced burnout, this conceptualization of burnout makes the MBI more of a diagnostic tool for assessing one’s *state of risk*, not one’s actual state of being. As every worker will fall somewhere on the burnout continuum, it becomes the duty of each employee to continue monitoring herself, keeping her risk low for her own benefit and for that of the entire organization.

Maslach’s work on the MBI led her to focus on solutions to burnout that resided in the individual. This shifting emphasis seems also to have been accelerated by her ongoing relationship with the Stanford psychology

³⁵² Wilmar Schaufeli and Dirk Enzmann, *The Burnout Companion to Study and Practice: A Critical Analysis* (London, UK: Taylor and Francis, 1998), 71.

³⁵³ Christina Maslach, Susan Jackson, and Michael Leiter, *MBI The Maslach Burnout Inventory: Manual* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1996 [1981]), 1.

department. In particular, her acquaintance with Richard Lazarus's work on the cognitive appraisal of stress influenced her own research; in fact, the MBI's frequency and intensity rating scales were based on Lazarus and J.B. Cohen's unpublished 1977 'Hassles Scale.'³⁵⁴ In addition, the entire discipline of social psychology was becoming influenced by the social cognition paradigm and the attempt to study social phenomena by investigating the cognitive mechanisms that were supposed to underlie them.³⁵⁵ As a result, social psychologists such as Maslach were increasingly interested in studying individual differences in the representation of and response to social phenomena as opposed to studying the social phenomena or group processes that gave rise to specific psychological states.³⁵⁶

Maslach's focus on individual coping was evident in her first mass-market book, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* (1982). Although she again started by averring that "burn-out is best understood (and modified) in terms of situational sources of job-related, interpersonal stress," she almost immediately refocused to discuss the ways individuals could manage their own risk for burnout, rather than discussing possible modifications to the work environment or society.³⁵⁷ Thus, she focused on the types of "interpersonal skills" people could learn to

³⁵⁴ Maslach and Jackson, "The Measurement of Experienced Burnout," 100.

³⁵⁵ Dana Becker, *One Nation Under Stress: The Trouble with Stress as an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 46-47; John D. Greenwood, "What Happened to the 'Social' in Social Psychology?," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 34, no. 1 (March 2004): 28; Shelley E. Taylor and Susan T. Fiske, "Getting Inside the Head: Methodologies for Process Analysis in Attribution and Social Cognition," in *New Directions in Attribution Research*, edited by John H. Harvey, William Ickes, and Robert F. Kidd (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1981).

³⁵⁶ Howard Gardner, *The Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

³⁵⁷ Christina Maslach, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 9-10.

make work more bearable, including learning how to talk to people about uncomfortable topics and how to start, continue, and end conversations.³⁵⁸ As sociologist Richard Sennett has noted, however, such ‘interpersonal training’ is often emphasized only when ill-defined organizational circumstances *require* individuals to be proactive, and when resources are not forthcoming at an organizational level.³⁵⁹ Thus, even the focus on interpersonal skills implied that burnout remediation would be the responsibility of the individual worker and not the organization.

In her conclusion to *Burnout*, Maslach stated that the book was in fact an extended attempt to teach people how to engage in detached concern, and that “[m]any of the skills and coping techniques discussed [herein] can be considered as a means toward that end.”³⁶⁰ As part of this undertaking, Maslach included an appendix in which she described a number of stress management skills that individuals could learn, such as deep muscle relaxation and mental imagery training, in order to reduce feelings of stress and burnout. Like much of the stress literature that proliferated at that time, this focus on self-management made it seem as if social engagement could cause people to ‘lose’ themselves, whereas the human services had originally been shaped by the notion that helping others was the best path to self-knowledge. In other words, from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, the quest for social change had morphed, such that helping others was

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 138-40.

³⁵⁹ Sennett, *New Capitalism*, 51.

³⁶⁰ Maslach, *Burnout*, 148.

now seen as a dangerous activity, one that often led not to self-fulfillment but to frustration, exhaustion, and burnout.

V. Conclusion

The specter of burnout transformed the human services' quest for social change into a more widespread belief that society was dangerous and that new forms of self-management and self-awareness were necessary for protection. Like the broader concept of stress that gained enormous traction during the 1970s, burnout could be used to critique the "unnatural effects of modern industrial civilization" but was more often used to focus energy on how individuals could adapt themselves to prevailing social and institutional relations.³⁶¹ At the same time that burnout was becoming widely recognized, sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild highlighted the way the modern service economy put increased value on self-awareness and self-management. In her book *The Managed Heart* (1983), she coined the term 'emotional labor' to describe the ways in which service workers "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain...the proper state of mind in others—in this case, the sense of being cared for."³⁶² Likewise, discussions of burnout often paired resignation over the interpersonal demands of work with suggestions for how to manage or mitigate negative emotions. As a result, burnout interventions focused mainly on the self, while organizations, institutions, and society were often shielded from calls for change.

³⁶¹ Russell Viner, "Putting Stress in Life: Hans Selye and the Making of Stress Theory," *Social Studies of Science* 29, no. 3 (June 1999): 401; Watkins, "Stress, Shock, and Adaptation," 51.

³⁶² Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012 [1983]), 7.

It is no coincidence that the concept of burnout, along with the psychological discourse that supported it and the psychometric technologies that have been used to investigate it, emerged out of the countercultural self-help institutions of New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area. Dedicated to self-development and the care of others, these institutions embodied the 1970s conflict between liberal social change and neoliberal self-modification. As burnout expanded out from the helping professions and into the wider business world—often through the dissemination of self-assessments and self-help literature—social change and caring for others became subordinated to the care of the self. As a seemingly necessary practice for overworked employees in a service economy, popular business literature would begin to focus on burnout remediation and stress reduction in order to staunch absenteeism and loss of productivity in the post-industrial workplace.

Throughout the 1980s, burnout self-assessments, many of them modeled on the MBI and Freudenberger Burnout Scale, flourished in popular periodicals aimed at every type of professional. Found in such outlets as *Executive Female*, a magazine for women managers, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and *Registered Representative*, a magazine that claimed on its cover that it was “requested and read by over 90% of the nation’s stockbrokers,” these questionnaires (and the self-help articles that accompanied them) gave currency to the notion that preventing burnout was the duty of the employee and not that of the organization. Popular burnout articles and quizzes bolstered the idea that caring for oneself was a person’s primary duty to society, a notion that has

become something of a truism in contemporary western culture. As the fear of burnout spread from the human services into the wider business world, the focus on social change as a path to self-development became reversed, such that caring for the self became seen as a necessary prerequisite to engaging and communicating effectively with others. The result has been a society where an increasing number of people believe that social change can best be achieved through self-modification and self-awareness, a development that the fear of burnout has done its part to foster.

Chapter 5

A Self-Imposed Prison of the Mind: Philip Zimbardo and the Development of Shyness Research, 1971-2000

In August 1971, Stanford social psychologist Philip Zimbardo organized the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) alongside graduate student colleagues Curtis Banks, Craig Haney, and David Jaffe. Although it was intended to be a two-week experiment to “assess the power of social forces on emergent behavior” in a prison-like environment, the experiment was halted after only six days because of seemingly unexpected and disturbing behavioral changes in both the students roleplaying prisoners and guards, and in the psychologists themselves.³⁶³ Although the SPE has since become one of the most famous psychological experiments of the twentieth century—perhaps second only to Stanley Milgram’s obedience experiments—and has spawned much psychological, sociological, and philosophical research and reflection, one of its most surprising and enduring effects has been the birth of a new era of shyness research. Asserting that, after only a couple days of adjustment, the mock prisoners in the SPE began acting like shy people—speaking less, averting their gaze, becoming overly deferential to authority—Zimbardo began to equate shyness with a “self-imposed psychological prison,” noting that “The kinds of

³⁶³ C. Haney, W.C. Banks, and P.G. Zimbardo, “Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison,” *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* 1, no. 1 (February 1973): 69; Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2007), ch. 10.

things shyness does to people are really comparable to the kinds of experiences people have in prisons.”³⁶⁴

Zimbardo’s penological metaphor for shyness was particularly appropriate for American audiences in the early 1970s. In the wake of the Prisoners’ Rights Movement of the 1960s, the ‘law and order’ presidency of Richard Nixon, and rising rates of crime and incarceration, comparing shyness to a psychological prison gave it a political currency it might not otherwise have had. At the same time, a concern with prisons—whether real or metaphorical—ran parallel to an ongoing national conversation about the authority and legitimacy of bureaucratic institutions and their effects on the individual. Informed by postwar social and organizational critiques by authors such as C. Wright Mills, Davis Riesman, and William Whyte, and fueled by a broad focus on self-development and individual rights in the late 1960s and 1970s, the attack on bureaucracy crossed ideological lines and informed attempts to reform institutions such as corporations, schools, hospitals, and government.³⁶⁵ For Zimbardo, whose research indicated that more than 40% of Americans self-identified as shy, the ‘epidemic’ of shyness was the result of the suppression of human individuality by these increasingly powerful and totalizing institutions.

And yet, Zimbardo did not forcefully advocate for the restructuring of social institutions or argue that the power of these institutions over the individual

³⁶⁴ Lisa Biedenbach, “Shyness—The ‘Psychological Prison’,” *St. Anthony Messenger* 85, no. 10 (March 1978): 30; Lynne Henderson, “Shyness Groups,” in *Focal Group Psychotherapy*, eds. by Matthew McKay and Kim Paleg (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 1992): 29.

³⁶⁵ David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (New York: Melville House, 2015).

should be restricted. Instead, he more often than not suggested that it was individuals who needed to change—their opinions, attitudes, and behaviors needed to be reformed so that they could become more receptive to social interaction but also able to resist society’s more coercive or dangerous elements. In other words, Zimbardo enjoined the shy to modify themselves for the good of the community. He drew upon Erich Fromm’s *Escape from Freedom* (1941) to argue that shy people—much like those who supported authoritarian governments—had been induced to trade freedom for security; he said that the shy “abhor freedom with its lack of structure, its individual responsibility, and its many demands to act and initiate.”³⁶⁶ In this way, Zimbardo characterized shyness as not merely a nuisance or even as a serious psychological disorder, but instead as an existential threat to American society. Shyness threatened to disrupt the natural ‘market’ of human relations: shy individuals were either unwilling or unable to relate to people as others did, by “bargaining and negotiating—for services, commitments, time, security, love, and so on.”³⁶⁷ If shyness had once seemed a relatively minor issue, or perhaps even a desirable personal characteristic, Zimbardo and the psychologists, psychiatrists, and journalists who followed his lead linked it to violence, a weakened democratic system, and even the decline of the free market.

Zimbardo and a number of other researchers and writers ventured to transform shyness from a topic of relatively minor interest into one of national

³⁶⁶ Philip G. Zimbardo, *Shyness: What It Is, What to Do About It* (Boston: De Capo Press, 1977), 114.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

concern, plausibly implicated in some of the most pressing issues of late-twentieth-century American society. The first step in this transformation was the creation, distribution, and analysis of the Stanford Shyness Survey, a modified self-assessment given to 800 high school and college students in the San Francisco Bay Area, in order to gauge their experience of shyness. It was from the results of this relatively small survey that the so-called ‘epidemic’ of shyness in America was first identified by Zimbardo. These findings set the stage for a national media campaign warning the country about the personal and societal dangers posed by shyness. During this media blitz, Zimbardo and others publicized shyness research and treatment as a remedy for the most salient fears of many Americans in the 1970s and beyond: loneliness and loss of community, narcissism and self-involvement, and more broadly, the effects of postindustrialism and the burgeoning service economy.

Each of these specific fears was a manifestation of more widespread concerns about the lack of effective communication and dearth of leadership in American society. As Patricia McDaniel has noted, communication became the “new gospel of success” in the 1970s and 1980s, bolstering an atmosphere in which getting ahead meant “manipulating a complex array of verbal and nonverbal communication skills.”³⁶⁸ As part of this trend, a number of psychologists followed up on Zimbardo’s work by creating new inventories, scales, and self-assessments to measure such things as shyness, sociability, and

³⁶⁸ Patricia A. McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts: Shyness, Power, and Intimacy in the United States, 1950-1995* (New York: NYU Press, 2003), 90.

communication apprehension. This era also saw the rehabilitation of the concept of leadership: during the “malaise and mayhem-filled years” of the 1970s—and in contrast to the overarching sentiment of the 1960s—Americans became increasingly comfortable with the idea that strong leaders were integral to functioning institutions.³⁶⁹ In the wake of the deaths of such luminaries as John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., Americans were searching for new charismatic leaders to take up their mantle and guide the nation out of despair. Zimbardo proposed that rampant shyness was a leading cause of America’s lack of strong leadership: shy individuals in politics, business, and the military often had the best ideas, but were too afraid to speak up. As a result, Americans had a responsibility to combat shyness on all fronts so that a new generation of leaders could emerge.

Philip Zimbardo and other social psychologists brought the ‘epidemic’ of shyness into public view, attempting to convince Americans that the cure for many late-twentieth-century social ills was the remediation of shyness at the level of the individual. Zimbardo’s research, both before and after the Stanford Prison Experiment, focused on the ways people ‘individuate’ or ‘de-individuate’ themselves from others and the circumstances in which people either feel control over, or controlled by, their environments. For Zimbardo, shyness was the result of a dynamic in which a person had been de-individuated by outside forces, and now feared the consequences of becoming a person again. In other words, after

³⁶⁹ Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: De Capo Press, 2001), xvi.

someone had become part of the faceless, nameless masses, the burden of interacting with people again had become too much to bear. As a result, Zimbardo tried to replace the mass with the *hive*: producing a group of individuals who could be managed in and through their individuality. By being taught how to re-engage with others, shy individuals might be able to plot their own course of self-development, but do so toward group—and ultimately, elite—ends.

I. Shyness Research Before the 1970s

Zimbardo's research and popularization efforts reignited an interest in shyness among scholars and the public in the 1970s. Nevertheless, a small but continuous stream of scholars from the mid-19th century on have commented on shyness as a characteristic worthy of psychological and physiological investigation. These earlier discussions set the stage for the reemergence of interest in shyness in the late 20th century; as a result, many scholars who write about shyness feel obliged to mention their forbears from the 19th and early 20th centuries, if only to legitimate what they believe has been an unfairly neglected subject of inquiry in the more recent past.

The most prominent 19th century scholar to provide an extended discussion of shyness was Charles Darwin. In his 1872 work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Darwin remarked on the seeming universality of shyness and, like many contemporary authors, linked it to excessive self-consciousness and fear of the judgment of others. He wrote that shyness was:

“...an odd state of mind...chiefly recognized by the face reddening, by the eyes being averted or cast down...Shyness seems to depend

on sensitiveness to opinion, whether good or bad, of others...Shyness...is closely related to fear; yet it is distinct from fear in the ordinary sense. A shy man dreads the notice of strangers, but can hardly be said to be afraid of them; he may be as bold as a hero in battle, and yet have no self-confidence about trifles in the presence of strangers. Almost every one is extremely nervous when first addressing a public assembly, and most men remain so through their lives.”³⁷⁰

Contemporary historians of science have often focused on Darwin’s interest in blushing as an overt physical reaction to an internal emotional state; they rarely mention, however, that Darwin’s interest in blushing was part of a much larger discussion on the phenomenon of shyness.³⁷¹ In addition, scholars rarely note that Darwin collected much of his data on shyness from questionnaires given to his acquaintances and fellow researchers. Much as the self-assessment questionnaire was Darwin’s preferred tool for investigating shyness in the late 19th century, so it would be Zimbardo’s instrument of choice in the late 20th century.

William James also believed shyness to be a topic of psychological and philosophical importance. In his 1890 work *The Principles of Psychology*, he remarked on Darwin’s discussion of shyness, delving further into the relationship between human and animal emotion. James noted that the instincts (such as, e.g., averting one’s gaze while passing a stranger) were as much a part of the human experience as they were for animals, and that we needed to understand animal instincts if we were to understand human emotion. He echoed Darwin in

³⁷⁰ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: D. Appleton, 1899 [1872]), 330-32.

³⁷¹ Erika Milam, “Barely Human: Aggression and the American Search for Human Nature in the 1960s” (lecture, Department of History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, October 15, 2012).

stating that shyness was a very strange, seemingly non-adaptive trait:

“Apparently, they [shyness, stage fright, and fear of not pleasing others] are pure hindrances, like fainting at the sight of blood or disease, sea-sickness, a dizzy head in high places...They are *incidental* emotions, in spite of which we get along.”³⁷² For James as for Darwin, shyness was a biological trait that had evolved over time and was related to instinctual animal behavior. Other late 19th century physicians and psychologists—such as prominent American developmental psychologist James Mark Baldwin—took the biological basis of shyness as a given.³⁷³

There was a relative dearth of interest in shyness research from the late 19th century up until the start of World War II. At that time, a number of prominent psychoanalysts turned their attention to the problems of shyness, social anxiety, and their physiological correlates. These psychoanalysts provided the blueprint for how more recent scholars have talked about shyness: researchers such as M. Ralph Kaufman and Hilde Lewinsky claimed that shyness was an unfairly neglected topic of interest, that it should be considered both an individual and social phenomenon, and that it was associated with negative self-conception. Lewinsky, for example, wrote in the early 1940s that:

“The phenomenon of shyness has received very little systematic attention...Shyness is mainly a social phenomenon...The meaning of the word ‘shy’ is vague. We find shyness described as a character trait, as an attitude, or as a state of inhibition...It is a state of hyper-inhibition, usually accompanied by physical symptoms like

³⁷² William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 432.

³⁷³ James Mark Baldwin, *Elements of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1893); J.M. Cheek and E.N. Krasnoperova, “Varieties of Shyness in Adolescence and Adulthood,” in *Extreme Fear, Shyness, and Social Phobia: Origins, Biological Mechanisms, and Clinical Outcomes*, eds. L.A. Schmidt and J. Schulkin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), ch. 11.

*blushing, stammering, perspiring, trembling...The mental state is described by the individual as a feeling of inferiority, of not being wanted...It is coupled with an inability to say the right thing at the right moment...*³⁷⁴

The topic of shyness again fell out of favor in the postwar period, only to reemerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s as personality and social psychologists increasingly came into conflict during the so-called ‘person-situation debate.’

At that time, a number of prominent psychometricians and personality theorists made the case that shyness was an in-born personality trait, one that ran in families and was largely inalterable.³⁷⁵ Raymond Cattell, perhaps the most prolific personality psychologist of the twentieth century, proposed that shyness was a constituent part of the so-called ‘thretic’ personality, a demeanor characterized by a lack of ‘social boldness:’ timid, hesitant, sensitive to threat, and easily intimidated. However, Cattell’s most dedicated work on shyness and the ‘H-negative’ personality factor (lack of social boldness) came during a period of crisis in personality psychology, from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, when social, situational, and contextual explanations of behavior—and the discipline of social psychology as a whole—were ascendant, and personality theorists found funding and institutional support increasingly scarce. The catalyst for this situation was Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel’s devastating critique of in-born personality traits in his 1968 book *Personality and Assessment*. In this work, Mischel, a fellow Stanford faculty member with Zimbardo at the time,

³⁷⁴ Hilde Lewinsky, “The Nature of Shyness,” *British Journal of Psychology* 32, no. 2 (October 1941): 105.

³⁷⁵ Raymond B. Cattell, *Personality and Mood by Questionnaire* (Oxford, UK: Jossey-Bass, 1973); Andrew L. Comrey, “Comparison of Personality and Attitude Variables,” *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 26, no. 4 (December 1966); Zimbardo, *Shyness*, 40-42.

argued that human behavior was too variable across time and situation to be reliably ascribed to stable personality traits, and that similar situations elicited similar types of behavior from people who had very different profiles on personality assessments. This period of crisis within personality psychology, and the concomitant rise of credibility and interest in social psychology, set the stage for Zimbardo's particular brand of shyness research to flourish.

II. The Psychology of Philip Zimbardo: Attitude Change, Cognitive Control, and Neoliberal Governance

Philip Zimbardo received his doctorate in psychology from Yale in 1959, working under the supervision of Carl Hovland, Neal Miller, Bob Cohen, and Jack Brehm on a dissertation that compared the predictive power of the theory of cognitive dissonance to Hovland and Muzafer Sherif's social judgment theory. Hovland and Sherif had hypothesized that, as opposed to cognitive dissonance theory, people rationally evaluate each new piece of information they encounter and modify their overarching beliefs accordingly. Zimbardo's dissertation indicated, however, that cognitive dissonance theory—particularly the denial of information that conflicts with a person's preexisting beliefs—predicts a person's views on a subject much better than does social judgment theory. This result led him to posit that changing a person's beliefs would not often occur through rational appeals using direct information, but instead through a battery of changes to a person's environment with associated appeals to the more irrational impulses latent within the human psyche.³⁷⁶ It is not surprising that Zimbardo

³⁷⁶ "Dissonance," Social Psychology Network: Philip G. Zimbardo, accessed February 6, 2018, <http://zimbardo.socialpsychology.org>

was a key member of the Yale psychology department's Attitude Change Program, having worked with his advisor Carl Hovland on enhanced techniques of persuasion and mind control for the purposes of attitude and behavior change among non-psychiatric, non-military populations.

After graduating, Zimbardo was a member of the psychology faculty at New York University from 1960 to 1967, moving to Stanford in the summer of 1968. One of his first major publications after moving to Stanford was the edited volume *The Cognitive Control of Motivation* (1969) in which he noted that he and his colleagues were interested in “the extent to which, and specification of the conditions under which, man can control the demands imposed by his biological drives and social motives” and the ways in which “man may thereby gain greater autonomy from environmental control of his behavior.”³⁷⁷ Zimbardo also wrote that “It is precisely because man can exercise choice that he is free to control and is not simply controlled” and that, “in the process of reducing cognitive dissonance, an individual may actually alter his own state of motivation, thereby controlling his internal environment and reducing the impact upon his behavior of any given biological drive or social motive.”³⁷⁸ These statements were early indications that Zimbardo's subsequent career would be characterized by an overriding interest in issues of motivation and control, particularly in trying to envision therapeutic interventions that might help individuals resist seemingly coercive environments.

³⁷⁷ Philip G. Zimbardo, *The Cognitive Control of Motivation: The Consequences of Choice and Dissonance* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1969), *Preface*.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 12, 18.

Nevertheless, it is questionable whether Zimbardo's interventions gave people more autonomy to decide for themselves how they wanted to live, or whether his techniques were in fact more closely related to mind control, attempting to create people who saw their self-interest as consonant with the ends of experts. Zimbardo was evidently of the same mind as George Miller, Harvard psychologist and president of the American Psychological Association in the late 1960s, who framed psychology's interaction with the public as between an authoritarian view—that psychologists should teach people how to act and think through expert, top-down communication—and what we might call today a 'neoliberal' view, in which psychologists would publicize their research in hopes that people would use this knowledge to change their own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, but in the ways that the psychologists saw fit. In other words, Miller's (and Zimbardo's) goal was to "change people's conceptions of themselves and what they can do."³⁷⁹ In fact, Miller quoted Zimbardo in his 1969 APA Presidential Address, telling his fellow psychologists that they should try to persuade people to change not through coercion but by getting them to convince *themselves* of the 'truth,' reducing their resistance little by little while expanding the repertoire of attitudes and behaviors that incorporated the ones that psychologists deemed most beneficial for individuals and society.³⁸⁰ This sort of 'cognitive restructuring' of belief would become a central tenet of Zimbardo's work for decades to come.

³⁷⁹ George A Miller, "Psychology as a Means of Promoting Human Welfare," *American Psychologist* 24, no. 12 (December 1969): 1071.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1072; Philip Zimbardo and Ebbe B. Ebbesen, *Influencing Attitudes and Changing Behavior* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 114-21.

Zimbardo and Miller's neoliberal aims have recently been categorized (in an approving way) as 'libertarian paternalism,' a term popularized in the early 2000s by legal scholar Cass Sunstein and behavioral economist Richard Thaler. They describe libertarian paternalism as paternalistic in the sense that it tries to "influence the choices of affected parties in a way that will make those parties better off," but libertarian in the sense that "people should be free to opt out of specified arrangements if they choose to do so."³⁸¹ This type of social arrangement gained particular appeal among elites in the 1970s, when expertise and authority were under fire and individualism and self-development were particularly in vogue. As a result, many of those who had been in positions of power (e.g., politicians, businessmen, academics, etc.) looked for a way to continue to influence people's choices while making sure that they did not consequently resent (or even acknowledge) their power. Scholars like Miller and Zimbardo began to advocate for a type of libertarian paternalism that lauded 'open communication' and 'humanistic self-development,' even though the methods through which these were achieved were handed down from experts. If Sunstein and Thaler's libertarian paternalism is allied with the current positive psychology movement, Zimbardo and Miller's rhetoric was the natural ally of positive psychology's predecessor, humanistic psychology, in the last three decades of the twentieth century.

³⁸¹ Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, "Libertarian Paternalism," *American Economic Review* 93, no. 2 (May 2003): 175; Cass R. Sunstein and Richard H. Thaler, "Libertarian Paternalism Is Not an Oxymoron," *University of Chicago Law Review* 70, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 1161.

Despite being a forceful advocate for these types of interventions, it is conceivable that Zimbardo did not foresee the deleterious consequences of what he was prescribing. As one psychologist has remarked, “The history of our work...is dotted with [] examples of our unwittingly serving the interests of the more powerful agent against the less powerful.’ As in the case of union leaders, who ‘intuitively knew that “communication” cools out the oppressed worker, making it possible for management to maintain something approximating the status quo,’...’many business leaders have used humanistic theory for corporate profit, without any real interest in the contentment of their workers.”³⁸² The understanding that communication and control were two sides of the same coin had animated the earlier work of cyberneticians such as Norbert Wiener, such as in his aptly titled 1954 work *The Human Use of Human Beings*. The notion that a science of communication and feedback could be used covertly to control human behavior seeped into psychology in the postwar era by riding the coattails of a self-development rhetoric and the psychological tools that made a managerial mode of (self-) control possible. Psychological tests and assessments, developed in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s to be used in corporations, exploded onto the broader cultural scene in the late 1960s and 1970s.

III. The Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) and the Creation of the Stanford Shyness Survey (SSS)

Zimbardo’s initial interest in shyness emerged out of his work on the Stanford Prison Experiment. To recap, in the summer of 1971, Zimbardo, along

³⁸² Grogan, *Encountering America*, 317-18.

with graduate students Craig Haney and Curtis Banks, recruited 24 college-aged male subjects in order to “assess the power of social forces” on emergent behavior in a simulated prison.³⁸³ After a battery of psychological tests and physical evaluations, each of the subjects was randomly assigned to the role of either prisoner or guard in the simulated prison, erected in the basement of the Stanford psychology department. Over the course of the next week, the prisoners, guards, and psychologists all seemed to undergo significant changes in behavior. One of the prisoners, dubbed ‘Doug-8612,’ experienced what the researchers described as an “extreme stress reaction of crying, screaming, cursing, and irrational actions” after attempting to lead a failed ‘prisoner rebellion,’ and had to be removed after only 36 hours.³⁸⁴ After this failed revolt, the guards became increasingly cunning and cruel in their treatment of the prisoners, yelling and screaming at them for minor infractions, withholding bathroom privileges, and attempting to ‘divide and conquer’ by giving extra food and larger cells to certain prisoners. At the same time, many of the remaining inmates began to act deferentially towards the guards: averting their eyes, speaking in hushed voices, and bargaining for special favors. Originally meant to be a two-week experiment, the investigation was halted after the sixth day, in part because of the objections of Christina Maslach, a recent graduate of the Stanford psychology department who had also recently begun a romantic relationship with Zimbardo. Her concerns about the treatment of the prisoners, coupled with the fear that the

³⁸³ Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo, “Interpersonal Dynamics,” 69.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

guards and psychologists had “become distanced from their own humanitarian values” is said to have convinced Zimbardo to shut down the study a week early.³⁸⁵

The Stanford Prison Experiment was motivated by an attempt to challenge a version of the ‘dispositional hypothesis’ of behavior, to cast doubt on the notion that the “major contributing [factor for] despicable conditions, violence, brutality, dehumanization and degradation...within any prison can be traced to some innate characteristic of the correctional and inmate population.”³⁸⁶

Zimbardo and his colleagues’ research was thus one of a number of volleys for the ‘situationist’ side of the person-situation debate that raged from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. As previously noted, Walter Mischel argued in his book *Personality and Assessment* (1968) that behavior was too inconsistent across situations to be understood by appeals to any theory that placed nature, temperament, or internal motivations above situation or social context. Zimbardo said that the SPE had demonstrated the power of social forces over those of disposition: during the course of only one week, many of the guards had turned brutal and callous, dehumanizing their charges, while the prisoners had turned sheepish, passive, and servile. Incorporating his research into his lectures during the subsequent semester, Zimbardo began to compare the prisoners in the experiment to shy people in society: if the formerly normal, socially-adjusted prisoners could become increasingly conflict averse, refusing to speak up and

³⁸⁵ Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2007).

³⁸⁶ Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo, “Interpersonal Dynamics,” 70.

averting their eyes from those in authority after just a few days, perhaps shy people were living in a socially-constructed prison, one reinforced by family members, authority figures, and society's dominant institutions, and which made them too concerned with their own appearance and behavior to, as Zimbardo would say, 'take the risk of freedom.'

Despite claiming to be the consummate situationist, however, Zimbardo did not merely stop at calling shyness a socially or culturally constructed prison. He also posited that shy individuals might be their own jailers: although they had been provoked to turn shy by the institutions of work, home, and school, their own minds had become primed to censor every thought and action, telling them they should not speak up, should not raise their hands, should not engage with others even though they might desperately want to do so. In his first popular article on the Stanford Prison Experiment, published in 1973 in *The New York Times Magazine* and titled, "A Pirandellian Prison: The Mind is a Formidable Jailer," Zimbardo wrote that:

"The physical institution of prison is but a concrete and steel metaphor for the existence of more pervasive, albeit less obvious, prisons of the mind that all of us daily create, populate, perpetuate. We speak here of the prisons of racism, sexism, despair, shyness, 'neurotic hang-ups' and the like...To what extent do we allow ourselves to become imprisoned by docilely accepting the roles others assign us or, indeed, choose to remain prisoners because being passive and dependent frees us from the need to act and be responsible for our actions? The prison of fear constructed by the delusions of the paranoid is no less confining or less real than the cell that every shy person erects to limit his own freedom in anxious anticipation of being ridiculed and rejected by his guards—often guards of his own making."³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ Philip G. Zimbardo, "The Mind is a Formidable Jailer: A Pirandellian Prison," *The New York Times Magazine*, April 8, 1973.

Zimbardo and his coauthors exhorted their readers to examine the ways in which they had become agents of their own despair. Although society, situation, and environment might impose restrictions, Zimbardo chose to intervene in the psychology of individuals, trying to convince them to stop ‘choosing’ to be imprisoned in their socially-constructed roles. The problem of shyness was particularly appropriate: it spoke to a psychological state in which an individual wanted desperately to communicate with others—as opposed to, e.g., introversion—but was hindered from doing so by a countervailing fear of ridicule and rejection. Shyness thus represented for Zimbardo the most insidious—and perhaps most common—prison of all: a prison of one’s own making.

With the publication of “A Pirandellian Prison” two years after the Stanford Prison Experiment, Zimbardo and his colleagues had entered into the popular sphere to argue that their research was applicable to any situation in which people’s freedom, their ability to control their own lives, was limited. However, going beyond the fears of external control or the power of one individual over another, Zimbardo depicted shyness as, in part, a self-imposed prison, linking it to a web of concerns both exceptional and unsurprising: about crime, law and order, and the prison system; about the invidious institutions of racism and sexism; and to mental illness. In highlighting these connections, he made the case that authoritarian social control and excessive self-control were one in the same, and that by attacking these ‘prisons’ at the level of the individual, one might also dissolve, eliminate, or make inconsequential their

bases in the social realm. In other words, if society was the problem, now the self—and the therapeutic building-up of the self—was the solution.

Like many psychologists over the past century and a half (starting with Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory at the University of Leipzig), Zimbardo used his students as subjects to examine a theory: that shyness was a widespread problem of great social concern. In the fall of 1973 and spring of 1974, Zimbardo, along with graduate students Robert Norwood and Paul Pilkonis, developed the Stanford Shyness Survey and distributed it to approximately 800 students at Stanford and Berkeley, as well as a number of students at Palo Alto High School. In addition to gathering demographic information on age, sex, ethnic background and religion, the survey was composed of 6 sections that asked respondents for: (1) a self-evaluation of their own shyness level; (2) the situations and people that elicited shyness in them; (3) their characteristic reaction to shyness; (4) the personal consequences of their shyness; (5) whether they saw shyness as beneficial or detrimental; and (6) how they identified and evaluated shyness in others. The results of these surveys indicated that around 42% of the survey-takers, all of whom were students aged 18-21 and located in the San Francisco Bay Area, self-identified as shy, and that 80% of the students had experienced shyness at some points in their lives. He also made two specific claims about the demographic groups involved in the study: he wrote that men and women were equally shy, and that only 24% of Jewish students reported being shy, which was about half the rate of Catholic or Protestant students. Thus, if they had included only self-described Catholics or Protestants—who made up approximately 70% of

the country in the early 1970s—the rate of shyness in America would have been closer to 50%.

The Stanford Shyness Survey (SSS) had been created at the behest of Zimbardo's students, a number of whom came to him after his classes to remark that their experience of shyness was remarkably similar to the prisoners' reactions in the SPE. In addition, Zimbardo noted that although the students who approached him about the topic were often of different ethnic backgrounds, those of Asian descent often thought of their shyness as a positive trait, whereas all of the students of European descent believed it to be a serious detriment to their lives. Thus, his first inclination was to create a survey that would get as much demographic data as possible on his student subjects, in order to discern what were the cultural or individual differences that both contributed to shyness and influenced the phenomenological experience of shyness and its psychological correlates. The original survey was given to Zimbardo's undergraduate students in the fall of 1973, and was then expanded to students in psychology courses at Berkeley and Palo Alto High School. Once all of the data had been compiled, Zimbardo and his graduate student colleagues suggested that, based on the answers to the question "Do you consider yourself shy?" on the SSS, 42.6% of Americans were shy, and that this epidemic was 'crippling' the country.³⁸⁸

IV. The Problem of Shyness in the Public Sphere

³⁸⁸ Stanford Survey on Shyness, Universality of Shyness [1977], n.d., Box 58, Folder 2, Philip G. Zimbardo Papers, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.

In her study *The Averaged American*, historian Sarah Igo notes how inventories, surveys, and censuses created an image of the ‘Average American,’ one that people started to emulate, often without conscious thought. This happened despite the fact that this supposedly statistically representative individual may have borne little resemblance to the people of a particular community or locale. Such technologies radically transformed Americans’ beliefs about themselves as individuals and as a collective, giving them statistics through which they could determine if they were part of the majority or the minority in a whole host of characteristics and allowed them to adjust their beliefs and behaviors accordingly. Echoing Michel Foucault’s work on biopolitics and Ian Hacking’s argument about the ways in which our social scientific classifications create ‘looping effects’ that alter our beliefs about ourselves and thus our behavior, Igo makes the case that surveys and assessments fundamentally changed the way Americans crafted their identities, and that such techniques could be used to control populations by inducing a feeling of needing to conform to the norm. For example, Zimbardo’s claim—based on the administration of the Stanford Shyness Survey— that 42% of Americans were shy and that this represented a crippling social epidemic, was used to push an ‘extraverted ideal’ that prized communication and interaction as crucial for success, happiness, and social progress.³⁸⁹ Drawing on such popular works as Vance Packard’s *Nation of Strangers* and David Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd*, and foreshadowing

³⁸⁹ Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking* (New York: Broadway Books, 2012).

Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*, Zimbardo looked to convince Americans that they owed it to themselves and others to communicate effectively, and that not doing so could spell the downfall of American society.

Sociologist Nikolas Rose has explored how we have been invented—and also ‘invented ourselves’—as subjects from the late 19th century on through psychological technologies and the discourse that surrounds and supports them. He notes that personality tests and self-report inventories have been some of the most successful technologies for producing and reifying the notion of individual personhood and identity in the West over the last century. The result is that we have come to think of ourselves less in communal terms than as individuals who belong to a number of disparate groups and whose interests and abilities are defined in contrast to that of other individuals. In the case of shyness, the use of self-assessments and therapeutic protocols has forwarded the notion that shyness is an affliction to be overcome by the individual, and not a neutral trait that should be considered one of a number of ways in which people behave and interact with the world around them. Despite the rhetoric that Zimbardo and others used during the 1970s to emphasize the ecological and environmental factors that produced shyness, the ascendant discourse on self-development and personal responsibility—coupled with technologies that emphasized one's individual traits and characteristics—made shyness into a pathology that required individuals to pursue active solutions for their own deficiencies.

Zimbardo's research and rhetoric quickly spilled into the public sphere. After the publication of “The Social Disease Called Shyness” there was an

explosion of articles about Zimbardo's research and shyness in general in magazines and newspapers across the country. For example, in the December 1975 issue of *Oui*, a now-defunct adult magazine, journalist Robert Wieder channeled Zimbardo when he wrote that shyness "is nothing less than a nationwide social disorder of ominous and growing proportions" which "manifested itself both domestically (as the Silent Majority) and internationally (as neoisolationism)."³⁹⁰ Drawing on Zimbardo's work and that of other prominent humanistically-inclined psychologists such as Rollo May, David McClelland, and Frederick Herzberg, Wieder argued that shyness was in the same class of problems as mild paranoia, chronic loneliness, low self-esteem, and narcissism. For Wieder, these disorders pointed to a nation so fearful of others and so defensive about its place in the world that its inhabitants were always looking out for dangers and threats (sometimes real, but mostly imagined). In other words, Americans could not stop comparing themselves to others, and they often found themselves lacking.

Oui, the publication in which Wieder's article appeared, was a pornographic magazine aimed at adult American males. For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, shyness, timidity, reticence, and so on, had been characterized as adolescent or female traits. As Patricia McDaniel has noted, especially with respect to middle- and upper-class white women, there was a dominant ideology of 'true womanhood' during the 19th century and again in the years following the

³⁹⁰ Robert S. Wieder, "America: Land of the Shy," *Oui* 4, no. 12 (December 1975): 98.

Great Depression that valued timidity and submissiveness.³⁹¹ However, in the late 19th century, as “economic and cultural changes stimulated anxieties about middle-class white men’s loss of manliness and growing effeminacy,” American men began to shed their own cultural expectations of self-restraint in an attempt to become more masculine.³⁹² Masculinity seems to have become endangered once again in the late 1960s and early 1970s as economic and cultural changes—e.g., the rise of the service economy, the increasing movement of women and minorities into the corporate workplace, and the emphasis on teamwork and group cohesion—made some men worry about their own lack of assertiveness and independence. For Wieder and Zimbardo, highlighting the epidemic of shyness was part of a larger project of re-instilling supposedly masculine values—leadership, self-confidence, boldness—into American men (and women too, for that matter). In addition, Wieder signaled that shyness led to a lack of sex, and that a lack of sex equaled human extinction, a message tailor-made for his pornographic magazine-buying audience.

Another article, “Conquering Shyness,” written by John Poppy and published in *New West* magazine in May 1977, focused much more intimately on Zimbardo’s work, presenting an in-depth look at the Stanford Shyness Clinic, opened in early 1976 by Zimbardo and therapist Meg Marnell. Poppy recounted the official story of the shyness clinic’s origins, in which Zimbardo’s students urged him to put his shyness research—and the lessons learned from the SPE—

³⁹¹ McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets*, 37-44.

³⁹² *Ibid*, 40-41.

into practice. Poppy quoted Zimbardo as saying that shyness is “an insidious personal problem that is reaching such epidemic proportions as to be justifiably called a social disease,” one that can “cut a normal-looking person off from freedom, stunt intellectual growth, ruin a potentially fine sexual experience, and even lead to violence.”³⁹³ Thus, only a few years after the creation of the Stanford Shyness Survey and the publication of its rather circumscribed findings about 800 young adults in the San Francisco Bay Area, journalists were writing articles in nationally-recognized publications about the epidemic of shyness.

V. The ‘Californian Ideology,’ the ‘California Cult of the Self,’ and the Promotion of the Flexible Individual in Shyness Research and Practice

Zimbardo and his colleagues’ implication that the ‘social disease of shyness’ was merely the aggregate result of individual shyness fit in with the ascendant beliefs of the era and capitalized on a type of thinking that did not barter in the sociological reasoning of prior generations. In a well-known article from 1995, two media theorists, Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, critiqued a widespread style of thinking that they termed the ‘Californian Ideology.’ They characterized this ideology as a type of technological utopianism in which individuals were said to be made free through the networking made possible by computers and the internet, but which they believed instead limited individual freedom by providing only managed avenues for interaction and communication. In other words, Barbrook and Cameron argued that Silicon Valley was selling a

³⁹³ John Poppy, “Conquering Shyness,” *New West Magazine*, May 9, 1977, 29.

radically new vision of freedom, but only in a sphere that could be easily regulated and delimited by corporations that could profit off of this circumscribed space. A certain type of ‘reactionary modernism’ that welded economic progress to social immobility had already suffused throughout the Bay Area in the 1970s and 1980s and influenced the work and worldview of many in the Stanford psychology department, including Zimbardo, creating an atmosphere in which freedom became equated with maintaining and furthering the status quo. Barbrook and Cameron argued that the individualized form of communication and interaction that existed in cyberspace—and was being mimicked in the offline world—was actually an expertly-crafted form of social control. In their estimation, the goal of technology companies was the same as many psychologists and cyberneticists in the postwar era: to get people to divulge their innermost selves in order to control—and eventually profit off of—them.

Barbrook and Cameron’s critique echoed that of Michel Foucault during the 1970s and early 1980s, when he lamented the rise of the ‘California cult of the self’ (Binkley 2007, 78). Foucault contrasted this intense self-involvement and lack of interest in others with his reading of the habits and behaviors of the ancient Greeks, for whom that care of the self was an intensely social practice in which there was an “entire activity of speaking and writing in which the work of oneself on oneself and communication with others were linked together.”³⁹⁴ Foucault believed that the reciprocal bonds between self-development and

³⁹⁴ Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 78.

communication—which had been robust for thousands of years—eroded to a significant degree during the postwar era, overtaken by an overarching focus on ‘lifestyle consumption’ and the crafting of ‘unique’ identities through the purchase of mass-produced goods. This cult of the self, emanating from Northern California and other countercultural bastions, valued communication not only as a method of self-development, but as a method of self-divulgence, one that corporations, advertisers, and publishers could then capitalize upon in order to make new, more efficient workers and consumers.

Earlier social critics such as Vance Packard also believed that the postwar cult of the self was the consequence of the loss of other forms of identity that had once been crafted through local and communal institutions. Packard was concerned about the unrooted nature of Americans in the postwar era, a consequence of the migration of millions of individuals from the country to the city that had been precipitated both by increasing economic opportunities for individuals and by corporations moving workers around the country to take advantage of cheaper costs, economies of scale, and lower tax rates. Packard believed the feeble ties of the postwar era had created profound loneliness and a loss of “community, identity, and continuity,” all of which “contributed to a deteriorating sense of well-being, both for the individual and for society.”³⁹⁵ The symbol of this phenomenon was the suburb, a non-organic community where neighbors were often strangers and family members were less likely to live together or even near one another. Packard argued that the most worrying facet

³⁹⁵ Vance Packard, *A Nation of Strangers* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1972), 5.

of this lack of rootedness was that community leaders and those who were once looked to for guidance were even more likely to be mobile, moving from one place to another as opportunities arose. As a result, communities would have to settle for second or third-rate leaders, and even they would eventually leave to find better opportunities elsewhere.

The perceived lack of leadership in the 1970s, coupled with a fear of loneliness and isolation produced by the loss of community, were all said to be factors in the emergence of the shyness epidemic. In addition, a resurgent corporate culture, one that resembled that of the 1950s but was tinged with the realities of downsizing and offshoring, caused many to believe that getting ahead necessitated keeping one's head down. As a result, corporations were said to be promoting shyness and discouraging people from forging independent paths, both in their work and in their personal lives. However, the vast majority of shyness remedies—along with the popular jeremiads against shyness—did not imagine new ways of helping people interact with those around them, but promoted trying to fit oneself more agreeably into large top-down institutions. Success in the 1980s seemed to necessitate (1) banishing one's shy or introverted tendencies, and (2) subordinating oneself to larger forces (be they those of the market or one's superiors). The proliferation of self-help articles on the topic of shyness in airplane magazines, grocery store tabloids, and infomercials demonstrates just how worried many people were about shyness, and how companies and advertisers were interested in capitalizing on that fear.

Zimbardo's message that "change was possible" had multiple valences, depending on the sender, receiver, and medium of the message. Vance Packard's 1977 book *The People Shapers* excoriated the ideal of limitless change, in part because Packard recognized how this mantra helped business, government, and scientific elites at the expense of the average citizen, namely by convincing him or her of the need to change to keep up with the demands of those who created the 'rules' of the systems in which they lived. At the same time, however, it was commonly held that the idea of inherent and inalterable personality traits, linked to bio-genetic notions of character, were insidious and stifling. As a result, Zimbardo's broader message—that individuals could and should change themselves and realize that change through therapeutic endeavors—gained traction and support throughout the 1970s. For example, the Shyness Clinic, funded by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, was a place where assertiveness, communication skills, and self-confidence would be taught in order to combat shyness and social phobia. The Clinic was opened by Zimbardo and clinical psychologist Meg Marnell in early 1976 on the campus of Stanford University. The headlines from a number of newspaper articles about Zimbardo and the Clinic that came out at the time read: "Clinic opens to fight shyness—the illness that can kill," and "Shyness: the disorder that 'cripples' 4 of 10 Americans." These articles both stated that the clinic was the "first step in launching an all-out attack on...America's number one ailment—shyness." Zimbardo told the journalists who wrote these stories that "there are about 100 million Americans troubled with shyness" and that "at its sinister worst, it causes

alcoholism, physical violence, suicide, even murder” and that since the shy person “hasn’t learned to deal with conflict it’s easier for him to pick up a gun or a knife and eliminate the conflict.”

Zimbardo’s media appearances on shows such as *20/20*, his press interviews, and his popular articles pointed to the overarching importance of two concepts in the late 1970s and early 1980s: individuality and communication. Despite his ‘ecological’ leanings, Zimbardo clearly believed that shyness—while created by society—was best remedied by the sufferers themselves. Like other shyness researchers, such as David Buss at the University of Texas and Bernardo Carducci at the University of Indiana, Zimbardo endorsed therapies, workbooks, and other sorts of interventions that promoted self-change. The penchant for self-development mediated by elites was a hallmark of the late 20th century ‘expertise industry,’ which Christopher Lasch characterized as a nationwide movement that attempted to change the behavior of the masses without making such manipulation evident.³⁹⁶ The attempt to become an individual through communication (as opposed to solitary contemplation, meditation, or other pursuits focused on the self, by the self) was a characteristic part of the 1980s and early 1990s for exactly the reason that communication allowed for expert control in a way that other activities did not. Buss, Carducci, and others promoted self-help books alongside their own self-assessment inventories, which the purchasers of such books could use to diagnose and repair themselves. Unlike the theories of,

³⁹⁶ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979).

e.g., Harvard professor Jerome Kagan, who believed that shyness was largely a temperament with which one was born, these other psychologists, while not denying the importance of genetics or biology, looked to environmental causes of shyness that could be modified or mediated by the individual. By locating the causes of shyness in the environment and its solutions in the individual, blame could be deflected from institution and social forces, while solutions could be focused on (and sold to) millions of shy American individuals.

The Stanford Shyness Clinic was supposed to be a catalyst for the creation of shyness clinics all over the country, to help people cope with their shyness, reticence, and self-consciousness, such that they did not create larger social problems by becoming alcoholics or murderers. This is to say, although this research had originally focused on the way individual behavior was shaped by social and situational forces, it soon morphed to emphasize how individuals should change their behavior to ensure the protection of society. Although shyness clinics did not flourish in the way Zimbardo had hoped, dozens sprang up across the United States and Canada, particularly on college campuses such as Indiana University, Boston University, the University of Maryland, and the University of Winnipeg. These clinics would mostly become subsumed under student health centers or wellness programs during the 1990s. During the ‘War on Drugs’ in the last three decades of the 20th century, and capitalizing on the idea that addiction meant a loss of control and a giving up of one’s autonomy, Zimbardo linked shyness to psychological and psychiatric issues that threatened to eliminate both self-control and sovereignty, two concepts prized in broader

American society as a socioeconomic environment flourished that no one was supposed to control.

VI. Social Learning Theory and the Question of Leadership in a Shy Society

The techniques that Zimbardo and Marnell used in the Shyness Clinic were underpinned by Social Learning Theory, a theory often associated with the work of Zimbardo's colleague Albert Bandura. As part of the trend toward the individualization and de-socialization of social psychology in the postwar era, one of the primary axioms of social learning theory was that learning was modified by cognitive processes, such that external stimuli cannot be pointed to as *the* explanation for a person's actions or beliefs. Despite its similarity to phenomenological approaches, it was used in ways that phenomenologists may not have agreed: in the context of shyness, social learning theorists often stressed that although it may be a social or situational problem, it should be remedied by modifying a person's thoughts, memories, and expectations. As a result, the Shyness Clinic specialized in self-confidence exercises, self-hypnosis, and assertiveness training, all part of a larger project to teach individuals that they could develop feelings of control over situations that made them shy (or, similarly, to feel control even when a situation was, in fact, uncontrollable). As a result, they emphasized individual treatments such as 'communication skills development' and 'cognitive restructuring' as necessary for overcoming the social problem of shyness.

Social learning theory is a cognitive behavioral theory of human behavior, one that posits that learning occurs through observation and instruction in a social context, but is mediated by internal processes. As a result, a person is not a passive recipient, but instead an active processor and interpreter of information. The implication is that environment, cognitive structures, and the behavior of others all impact the way in which a piece of information is learned and integrated into the self. Having emerged from a line of behavioristic thought going from Clark Hull to B.F. Skinner to Albert Bandura (and integrating ideas from positive psychologists Aaron Beck and Martin Seligman), social learning theory helped individualize and make therapeutic those psychological theories that may once have pointed mainly to environmental or social experience. Instead of laboring to change the society or environment in which shyness was produced, the valence of social learning theory was such that a person was expected to modify his or her own cognition and responses to the environment in order to change his or her behavior. Within the realm of social psychology, this change shifted the political pole away from social change and social activism (a central piece of social psychology since its inception) and toward an individualized style of therapeutics, one that paid lip service to the importance of society and environment, but sought solutions at the level of the individual. This change bolstered the move towards profiting off of individual therapy while at the same time recognizing the importance of social processes.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ James M. M. Good, "Disciplining Social Psychology: A Case Study of Boundary Relations in the History of the Human Sciences," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 389-90.

Beliefs about the detrimental effects of shyness on both leadership and followership turned what could have been a social analysis into an individualized and personalized one. Instead of questioning how and why certain types of organizations produced shyness, lack of assertiveness, or poor communication, the proposed remedies for these situations were expected to be undertaken by individual employees through stress-reduction techniques, performance improvement plans, and those types of psychological tests and training that ignored group problems (or, more correctly, turned group problems into individual ones). Indicting or criticizing the group, structure, or institution became increasingly difficult when every problem was seen as one that could be remediated through individual means. The function of the human resources department, in large part, was to individualize employees, ensuring that individualized plans for success would fragment employees and reduce the risk that a group of employees could band together to have a negative impact on the institution's profitability. Thus, good leadership also became associated with ensuring that employees did *not* have an outsized impact on the group, a situation that was bolstered by technologies that ensured that employees saw themselves as individuals on a path toward their own success within a larger organization that they could not control or change.³⁹⁸

Tests such as the Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale, the Reticence and Lack of Communication Scales, and the Stanford Shyness Survey, as well as modified versions of cognitive behavioral therapy and exposure therapy, all became used

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 395-96.

by human resources departments to help employees make peace with the structure of the corporation and create predictable paths of employee development. Christopher Lane, in his numerous works on social phobia, has argued that there is a danger that we have “transformed our expectations of the individual in society so dramatically that we now tend to believe that active membership in community activities, the cultivation of social skills (becoming a ‘people person’) and the development of group consciousness are natural, universal, and obligatory” (Lane 2007, 208-9). As Lane’s work makes clear, the emphasis on self-development and the cultivation of personal skills is not merely for the benefit of the individual, but an attempt to create a more harmonious fit between individual and group. In Zimbardo’s first self-help book, *Shyness: What It Is, What to Do About It* (1977), Zimbardo made the case over and over that shy people owe it to society to learn how to communicate because if they did not, they would likely become supporters of authoritarianism. For Zimbardo, the shy person was the archetypal undemocratic citizen, and thus a threat to liberal society. In the conclusion to Part I of *Shyness*, Zimbardo wrote that:

“According to Erich Fromm’s brilliant thesis, Escape from Freedom, totalitarian governments like Hitler’s flourish when people are induced to trade freedom for security...shyness abhors freedom with its lack of structure, its individual responsibility, and its many demands to act and initiate, not just to react and wait. The shy person is better at playing follow-the-leader than at playing being the leader, or the opposition...Through the shyness clinic, it has become clearer to me that shy men and women have abdicated the responsibility for taking the risk of freedom...Caught up in a web of egocentric preoccupations, they stop tuning in to what other people are saying...When a person is willing to hide behind the security blanket of passive anonymity, not only is freedom sacrificed, but the passion for life is as well. Under such circumstances, blind

obedience to authority is easier to obtain and fanatical mass movements find ready and faithful followers."³⁹⁹

VII. Conclusion

In an era marked by a predominant interest in personhood, identity, and the self, the prison metaphor—and fears of mass psychology—offered Zimbardo a powerful idea against which he could marshal his psychological interests and research. Having felt called to action by George Miller's well-known 1969 Presidential Address to the APA, in which he enjoined psychologists to "promote human welfare" by "fostering a new public conception of man based on psychology," Zimbardo increasingly engaged with the public and its concerns, hoping to make psychological research and its application *the* solution to America's problems.⁴⁰⁰ Not merely in his scholarly publications but also in interviews, magazine articles, and self-help books, as well as on morning talk shows and television news programs, Zimbardo argued that shyness was America's number one social problem, an epidemic afflicting at least 40% of Americans. Relying extensively on Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, Zimbardo argued that shy people had 'traded freedom for security' and were thus analogous to the followers of authoritarian leaders in the 1930s and 1940s. He drew on contemporary research to assert that the shy, much like the self-conscious, were more easily persuadable, and thus more likely to 'follow the crowd.' He argued that the over-controlled individual, the person with too much

³⁹⁹ Zimbardo, *Shyness*, 114.

⁴⁰⁰ George A. Miller, "Psychology as a Means of Promoting Human Welfare," *American Psychologist* 24, no. 12 (December 1969): 1069-70.

‘impulse control,’ was likely to snap and become un-controlled: unable to speak up, the quiet, meek individual, full of rage, could easily turn into a ‘sudden murderer.’ Zimbardo’s work resonated with conservative fears about a link between the counterculture, the New Left, and rising rates of crime and violence, as well as more widespread concerns about social disintegration and the decline of the family in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

Zimbardo believed shyness was a social problem that was best remedied by the individual. In an era in which the focus was squarely on self-investment and self-development, solutions that tried to change institutional or social structures were not readily envisioned, and even harder to implement. Zimbardo’s shyness research and interventions pathologized a way of being in the world that seemed quite normal (in cross-cultural research, no country had fewer than 30% of respondents identify as shy, and some, such as Japan, approached 75% *and* saw the trait as something to be cherished). As Christopher Lane has said, our critique of shyness says more about our incessant need to feel busy, to join groups, and to not miss out, than it anything about the pathological nature of wanting to be alone or avoiding interaction with other people.

Zimbardo’s research, although it foreshadowed the interest in social anxiety disorder and social avoidance in the 1980s and 1990s, was not catalyzed by the financial interests of pharmaceutical companies as was the case for many other psychiatric researchers. And yet, his work helped foster the idea that a certain norm existed in social relations, and particularly in one’s relationship to business and family, the two pillars of postwar life. To be good to both family and

colleagues, one needed to be a very particular type of individual. Zimbardo's therapeutic endeavors, media appearances, and articles helped pathologize shyness and led to the flourishing of cognitive behavioral therapy and positive psychology as remedies for shyness and social anxiety in the 1990s and 2000s. Shyness, a feeling which most people experience some of the time, became something to be banished through the use of therapy or medication, instead of something to be accepted and perhaps even listened to or cultivated.

Conclusion

From the late 1910s to the mid-1930s, dozens of personality tests and assessments were created by psychologists for the purpose of integrating individuals into the dominant institutions of American society. Three decades of relatively open immigration from Europe—severely restricted in 1921 with the introduction of the National Origins quota system—meant that tens of millions of immigrants looked ripe for adjustment, alongside the almost 5 million people who had served in some way during World War I. In addition, as historian Warren Susman has argued, America transitioned from a ‘culture of character’ to a ‘culture of personality’ in the 1920s, in no small part because of the need to quickly and efficiently evaluate and put to work recent immigrants, veterans, and millions of individuals moving into cities from rural areas. During the ‘Roaring Twenties,’ when corporations were growing exponentially and middle management had become “the most powerful institution in the American economy,” corporations relied on personality tests to identify useful characteristics that would help them fill staff and management positions with a steady stream of agreeable (but ultimately interchangeable) individuals.⁴⁰¹

Psychologists such as Robert Woodworth and L.L. Thurstone created some of the earliest structured, self-report tests (as opposed to open-ended, ‘projective’ tests) during this time, focusing mainly on such traits as neuroticism, extraversion, dominance, and self-sufficiency. Although tests like the Woodworth

⁴⁰¹ Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1977), 1.

Personal Data Sheet (1919) and the Thurstone Personality Schedule (1930) were explicitly created and used to classify and hierarchize individuals within social and organizational settings, they could also appeal to individuals who believed they had been unfairly discriminated against because of national origin, class background, religion, or any of a number of other group characteristics. Thus, bound up in these technologies were two seemingly competing and yet ultimately complementary impulses: to judge and rank people as atomic and unique individuals, and to create an all-encompassing social organism in which almost everyone could find a place and where almost every trait was—or could be made to be—valuable. These technologies and their concomitant human resources techniques laid the groundwork for the ‘adjustment’ psychology that would characterize the middle decades of the 20th century, culminating with that era’s ideal of the ‘organization man.’

Objective personality tests, inventories, and questionnaires existed alongside the projective and image-based tests that had been prominent in European psychiatric practice since the late 19th century and which were introduced to the American landscape as psychoanalysis flourished during the 1910s. The Rorschach and Szondi tests were administered to soldiers and veterans to assess behavioral predispositions or psychiatric conditions that might hinder effectiveness on the battlefield or cause problems at home after discharge. In addition, newly developed projective tests, such as Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan’s Thematic Apperception Test (1935), were also used in medical, therapeutic, and organizational settings and helped bridge the gap

between therapeutic and managerial work. While the Rorschach and the TAT dominated the projective side of personality testing in America for much of the 20th century, thousands of item and question-based tests were created, often for medical purposes, but also with an eye towards helping individuals adjust to American organizations and institutions. As a result, these tests often included scales and indices that straddled the boundary between medical diagnosis and socially valuable traits. These easy-to-use technologies were also scalable in a way interviews and observational analyses were not: doctors, psychiatrists, and psychologists were not needed to administer and give results—human resources directors, managers, and even the test-takers themselves could do much of the work.

After the war, an increasing number of psychologists wondered (1) how personality tests could be used to investigate the normal and positive characteristics of people (as opposed to the pathological) and (2) what the value of personality was at a time when intelligence was still thought by many to be the main factor for success in American society. The focus on normal functioning and development grew throughout the 1940s, bolstered by Abraham Maslow's work on what would eventually come to be known as 'humanistic psychology.' In 1943, he published the first piece of scholarship to outline his new project, a not inappropriately titled article, "A Theory of Human Motivation." In this piece, Maslow introduced his hierarchy of human needs and motivations, believing that individuals naturally strived for self-development and self-realization by developing their skills, abilities, and interests, and eventually, giving themselves

up to a higher cause (which could be spiritual or religious, but might also be institutional, organizational, or social). Humanistic psychology provided a holistic framework in which one could become a supposedly more 'complete' individual by working towards group ends. Unlike Carl Rogers and Rollo May, Maslow emphasized the importance of self-development in group, social, and organizational situations, resulting in a contentious (if still generally friendly) relationship with certain parts of the counterculture. Nevertheless, Maslow's liminal position within the counterculture allowed him to act as an intermediary between California organizational and management theorists and the erstwhile seekers, hippies, and followers of the Human Potential Movement who were entering the corporate workforce en masse.

A number of social research institutions sprang up soon after the end of World War II, between 1945 and 1950, to build upon knowledge gained during the war (and especially on stress, motivation, and group communication) in order to develop techniques that could help individuals with problems that threatened both personal development and social cohesion. At a time when thinking outside of an organizational context seemed particularly rare, the tests, therapies, and exercises that were created by IPAR, the National Training Laboratories, and the Institute for Social Research valorized 'individual differences' and attempted to put them to work for the benefit of groups, teams, and institutions. The attempt to identify individual differences in order to create more productive groups was made possible to a large extent by welding the rhetoric of humanistic psychology to a social ideology that looked to integrate millions of people and make them

productive. Although these types of institutions were set up all over the country, and resided to a large extent at elite universities and government establishments on the East Coast, much of the most consequential work was done at outposts on the West Coast, populated by scholars and researchers who moved to California as money and resources flowed there after the war. Places like the Western Training Laboratories (an outpost of the National Training Laboratories) and Esalen nurtured the careers of many of the 20th century's most prominent business theorists and organizational psychologists—scholars such as Douglas MacGregor, Rensis Likert, Chris Argyris, and Warren Bennis—who built upon wartime systems research by using humanistic insights to help adjust individuals to industrial society.

As humanistic psychology became a national interest, spurred on by the attention given to the counterculture and the Human Potential Movement, the specific complex of ideas about liberal individualism, technology, and organization that had been born in the Northern California context expanded outward. As a dense meeting point for both the academic-military-industrial complex and the counterculture, the San Francisco Bay Area fostered an ideology based on finding individuality through group processes, and sublimating oneself to a group or network (this same impulse led many millions to recommit themselves to religion, particularly during the Evangelical Christian revival of the 1970s). This utopian ideology spread across the country, propelled by the academics and businesspeople who found personality testing and computers to be not only useful, but quite lucrative. These technologies held up the individual

as paramount but also as an entity that derived value from being connected to others, an idea that gave rise to a *hive psychology* that blunted criticism of both groupthink and organizational overreach. As Nikolas Rose and Fred Turner have expounded upon, the critics of adjustment provided cover for a *new* type of adjustment, one that used individual assessment, therapy, and self-development to create an even more tightly controlled and monitored form of management.

The hive provided an outlet for flexibility, individual freedom, and self-development that had not been easily attainable in the prior organizational society. Much as when a person moves from a lower class to higher class it can be used to tamp down criticism of a system in which the vast majority do not achieve this outcome, the fact that some individuals could develop themselves as they wanted, dissent from their managers' advice, etc., meant that those who were not able to do so had less freedom to complain. On the other hand, hive psychology was in some ways empowering, insofar as it gave people roles to play in an otherwise impersonal organizational or economic system, and told them that by developing themselves as individuals, they would also be helping the group become more productive. Work on the self thus became a way to work for the group, and vice versa.

Finding happiness and purpose chiefly through work was the psychological corollary of neoliberalism, a reinvigorated type of political economic arrangement during the last three decades of the 20th century. Neoliberalism imagined every individual as *homo oeconomicus*, a type of person whose value derived ultimately from his or her economic output, as measured by

the amount of profit accumulated for oneself. In an economic system from which there was supposed to be *no escape*, promoters used a rhetoric of individual freedom (drawn from both humanistic psychology and existentialism) to convince workers that the system was the *best of all possible worlds*, even though their actions were often directed from the top by elites, executives, and managers who directed the economy and individuals for their own ends.⁴⁰² The irony was that every office worker was reimagined as an independent entrepreneur, despite the steady decline of small business and the exponential increase in reliance on the therapeutic and helping professions by large corporations. Managers themselves were reconceived as therapeutic-hygienic workers, tasked with keeping motivation and morale high such that their employees could be both happy and productive.

Personality testing boomed in the 1960s and 1970s for reasons both internal and external to the psychological discipline. The lexical hypothesis—which stated that the adjectives most commonly used to describe behavior are the main constituents of personality—was refined by using statistical tools that allowed for the identification and cancelling out of overlapping traits, giving psychologists a more unified theory of personality and ‘scientizing’ a formerly unruly sub-discipline. In addition, on account of both the criticism of the concept of personality itself by eminent psychologist Walter Mischel, and the subsequent interest in social psychology, a situation was created in which many personality

⁴⁰² Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979* (New York: Picador, 2010), chs. 11 and 12.

psychologists had to enter private industry to continue doing their research (and to make money). Similar to what happened in the 1910s and 1920s when testing companies such as the Scott Company and the Psychological Corporation were chartered, comparable conditions obtained in the 1970s, with millions of new workers entering business amidst a turbulent sociopolitical environment. Tests helped manage this environment and the individuals who populated it, at a time when many elites believed the system was on the verge of collapse.

The tests profiled in this dissertation helped identify and ‘correct’ those problems that psychologists and managers believed threatened the entire social, political, and economic order. Loss of motivation, communication, and leadership were remedied by focusing on individual adjustment, even though these were manifestly problems of the organized, hierarchical environment. Individuals were told that by working on their abilities in these three areas, they would be able to develop themselves and, at the same time, create a more vibrant and resilient social and organizational system. However, even as psychologists and human resources managers told employees to protect themselves against, e.g., burnout, they were theorizing that there might be an *optimal level of burnout* that would keep people working hard and discourage them from taking time off or quitting. The popularity of such research indicates that the goal was not to help the individual per se, or to actually remedy individual psychological problems, but to bolster productivity and efficiency in corporations.

By the 1990s and 2000s, the remediation of group, team, and organizational problems through individual adjustment became ubiquitous; the

notion that social or group problems might require social or group remedies seemed almost passé. This was not only a management tactic, but also a result of the celebration of individuality and individual differences and the push toward self-development. Despite the empowering potential of this movement, it was often directed from the top-down and managed by executives. Knowing more about one's employees than they knew about themselves was an important part of human resources management, and allowed managers to provide a menu from which individuals could choose their own (limited) paths of development. The Human Relations movement of the 1920s and 1930s reinvented itself as Organizational Development in the 1960s and 1970s, using countercultural and humanistic ideas to appeal to workers and capitalize off of a widespread antipathy to organizations, while still retaining the Human Relations movement's overriding interest in group productivity.

The aggregation of individual dossiers in the files and bureaus of human resources departments (and psychological research institutes) created large caches of data that could be used to find patterns tying together personality, work style, and efficiency. This data could then be used by managers, marketers, pollsters, and others to pinpoint theoretically ideal workers and consumers. The aggregation and sifting through of such massive amounts of data was made possible by the development of computing power and internet technology from the 1980s onward. That this data on millions of people was used to hire or market to individuals reinforces the fact that individuals were not seen as ends in themselves, but as parts of larger groups, and that the rhetoric that played on

individuality and self-development was often part of an attempt to create productive, efficient, and profitable groups.

Personality research institutes such as IPAR and the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) were 'obligatory points of passage' in the actor-networks of the military-academic-industrial complex. They translated military concerns into corporate and organizational solutions, taking reams of data that had been compiled during the war and turning them into technologies that could adjust individuals to the dominant institutions of American life. IPAR, one of the preeminent institutions engaged in this endeavor, was strategically placed in the San Francisco Bay Area, where it could integrate humanistic and countercultural ideas into its research, allowing it to appeal both to those who were looking to manage human capital and those who would become that capital. IPAR's intimate relationship with Consulting Psychologists Press allowed it to distribute its paper technologies far and wide, changing the landscape of industrial relations and human resources such that what had once been particular to the environment of Northern California became the norm throughout the country.

The transcontinental movement of people, ideas, and monies created an atmosphere in which personality psychology of a very specific sort, one that mixed the rhetoric on self-fashioning with the goal of group development, could thrive everywhere. Conditions that had originally been identified in soldiers were now applicable to businesspeople, artists, and psychologists themselves, as the psychology of war became translated into the psychology of everyday life. Extraversion, shyness, burnout, etc., can all trace their histories back to wartime

work on such traits as neuroticism, dominance, leadership, and motivation. The current state of the art in personality psychology, the so-called OCEAN or HEXACO models (which will be described in the postscript), were developed—like all of the tests described here—by combining team and group psychology with humanistic psychology. This amalgamation describes our current psychological landscape, and points to a 21st century that will be at once more individualistic, and yet never more hierarchical.

Postscript

In the summer of 2017, a news story broke reporting that up to 87 million Facebook users may have had their data used without their knowledge to create ‘psychographic’ profiles which were used to market to them as well as influence their voting behavior. Although a large percentage of these individuals had taken a personality quiz on Facebook that asked if they were willing to share their online data, a loophole in the interface also allowed the company, Cambridge Analytica, to gather data on the friends of the test-taker, people who had not been asked permission for their data to be shared. This online test, originally a project of the Psychometrics Centre at Cambridge University in the U.K., was distributed by Cambridge Analytica, a company focused on ‘psychographic marketing’ and ‘influencing campaigns’ for companies, governments, militaries, and other large-scale state and non-state actors.

Of course, identifying personality traits and using them to predict—and even to change—behavior is not new. What is new, however, is the development of the computing power necessary to sift through the billions of data points (so-called ‘Big Data’) to create psychological profiles on millions of people, with the goal of making very targeted, pinpoint predictions about individuals and their future behavior. If demographics could be considered the revolutionary science of populations of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, psychographics might well be considered its data-driven, 21st century successor. Demographics looks at groups of hundreds of thousands or millions of people, all of whom share one or a small number of traits; psychographics can be used to find a small handful of

individuals who share dozens or perhaps hundreds of similarities. As a result, psychographics has the potential to be a much more powerful tool for identifying, targeting, and manipulating the behavior of individuals.

In the United States, the vast majority of adults have their personal data sold to corporations every day by data aggregation companies such as Experian and Acxiom. Not only do these companies sell raw personal data, they also increasingly create and sell the psychological profiles that correspond to them, such that a company might know that a person who likes Lady Gaga on Facebook is much more likely to be extraverted. For a music company, this is valuable information: if they know who is extraverted, they can target ads for Lady Gaga CDs and concerts to that person specifically, and not to introverts who are less likely to buy their product. Such applications bolster journalist and Harvard Fellow Sara Watson's claims that although "Personalization appeals to a Western, egocentric belief in individualism...it is based on the generalizing statistical distributions and normalized curves methods used to classify and categorize large populations."⁴⁰³ And it's not just extraversion that data aggregation companies and psychographic marketers use to identify potential consumers: since the early 1990s, these companies have mainly used a personality model called OCEAN, or the 'Big Five' model, that includes 5 supposedly overarching traits: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. The OCEAN model is supposed to be a streamlined version of the numerous

⁴⁰³ Sara M. Watson, "Data Doppelgangers and the Uncanny Valley of Personalization," *The Atlantic*, June 16, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/data-doppelgangers-and-the-uncanny-valley-of-personalization/372780/>.

scales and indices that can be found in the MMPI, the CPI, the TAT, and the MBTI, refined through the use of new techniques in factor rotation and analysis in order to group together scales that had once overlapped.

Although the OCEAN model is a theory and not a proprietary technology, scores of tests have emerged that use the OCEAN model to identify and predict personality, the most commonly used one at present being the 240-item NEO-PI-R, or Revised NEO Personality Inventory. However, companies such as Cambridge Analytica (and even the Psychometrics Centre at Cambridge) use much less in-depth versions of the NEO-PI-R that sometimes include as few as 15 questions. Researchers have also been able to use people's 'likes' on Facebook to predict their personalities and market to them, using Big Data to correlate likes with one's Facebook information.

The OCEAN model derived from the work of Air Force psychologists Ernest Tupes and Raymond Christal in the early 1960s, who used the lexical hypothesis in an attempt to understand the behavior of military personnel in organized, group situations. OCEAN, however, did not derive from a wholesale reinvestigation of all possible behavioral adjectives, but was instead formed by a meta-analysis of other tests such as the CPI and MMPI. As a result, it relies on the traits already found by other researchers, particularly in military and medical contexts, and has thus focused on the importance of maintaining motivation and morale in group settings.

Whereas personality testing in industry is an overt operation, one that might take hours or days and which the employee or job seeker knows they are

taking part in, the new methods of data collection and personality testing make possible much more covert methods of understanding, predicting, and changing employee behavior. Much as Warren Lamb pioneered ‘movement pattern analysis’ in the 1940s and 1950s to covertly assess job seekers’ personalities from the way they carried themselves and moved their bodies, employees can now have their personalities deduced from the rapidity of their computer keystrokes, the words they most frequently type into their keyboard, their writing style, and their internet search history (indeed, IBM Consultants have used their AI program, Watson, to do just this).

It is clear that those who compile and control the psychographic profiles of individuals can not only market products and services to them, but can also influence voting patterns, as the 2016 Presidential election made clear. Every political candidate in the election used some sort of data aggregation and social media campaign, but those who used micro-targeting based on personality psychology seemed to achieve much higher levels of success. One could see this merely as the new frontier of advertising, but there are legitimate questions as to the extent to which this is a threat to democracy, a manipulation of the populace by elites in covert ways not seen before.

When people put their personal information on the internet, they become laborers monetizing themselves for the benefit of others. Using personality tests to decode that data is not so unlike what marketers have done in the past, the differences being that (1) companies now have many thousand more data points to work from, ones that do not distinguish between a person’s status as a worker

or as a consumer, and (2) individuals are doing much of the work for these companies, putting their data out into the ether and taking personality tests to allow companies to correlate information with personality in order to market to them, and in a very real sense, to manipulate their behavior.

Just as the personality tests I have discussed in this dissertation emerged mainly in Silicon Valley and then expanded to the rest of the country (and the world), again these new types of quizzes and profiles have emerged in Silicon Valley—the home of Big Data—and radiated outwards. The quest to know people and to capitalize on their data in order to sell to them or make them productive has been the main goal of the military-academic-industrial complex since the start of the postwar era, a project which seems to originate, again and again, in the environs of Northern California.

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