Master Thesis Theory and History of Psychology

Towards a Psychological History: Social Science and Historical Methods

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Date: 29-03-2024

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Abstract:

Contemporary psychologists tend not to interact with history. This thesis addresses why that is the case by tracing attempts at integrating psychology and history. Additionally efforts at including history in psychology are compared with the inclusion of history in other social sciences, primarily economic history. Early attempts at integrating history in psychology have mainly been done by psychoanalysts, which did not result in increased collaboration between the fields. Modern psychologists tend to discount research that is not based in experimental methods, with the exception of qualitative psychology. However, qualitative psychologists mostly focus on the present as well. Psychologists should look at economic history for methods in quantitative historical research. For qualitative historical research, the Annales school has established various methods that could be useful. Work from historical ontologists could serve as a meta-theoretical framework to back these approaches.

Towards a Psychological History: Social Science and Historical Methods

Psychology is often defined as "the study of the mind and behaviour" (American Psychological Association Dictionary, n.d.). Yet despite this broad aim, most psychologists use methods which limit them to studying the (human) mind and behaviour in experimental settings, thereby primarily focussing on contemporary minds and behaviours. Increasingly, there have been efforts to incorporate a broader methodological toolkit in psychology, as attested by an increased attention to qualitative methods (Levitt et al., 2018). However, what both of these approaches share is that the scope of psychological research is almost exclusively restricted to contemporary settings, i.e. most quantitative and qualitative researchers use sources from the present. Another factor that guides the majority of quantitative psychological research – qualitative research not so much – is a methodological paradigm not unlike that found in for instance biology. Namely that the causes and processes of the 'psyche' are universal (Hunt, 2002), hence these universal psychological processes can be identified using humans living right now and they hold for everyone, everywhere at all times. The current psychological paradigm is built on assumptions about the human mind and behaviour. The model used by psychologists is similar to the biological model, which also assumes that physiology and the chemical processes (e.g. neurochemistry or the workings of a cell) underlying the biological are universal. This is not to say the environment does not influence humans or animals – as it of course does in for instance evolutionary theory – but rather the way in which the environment influences the subject is universal (e.g. pollutants will have the same effect on the body).

History is a discipline which has almost exactly the opposite approach compared to psychology, but with a shared aim. Like psychology it also aims to explain, describe and find reasons for human behaviour. History is multifaceted in this approach, with some historians

favouring explanations based on political, economic or cultural developments to name a few. Where psychology and history differ in terms of their sources is that most historians almost exclusively focus on the past, whereas as explained above, most psychologists almost exclusively focus on the present.

This thesis addresses the potential implications of bridging the gap between psychology and history to create something like a 'psychological history', and how psychology could benefit from such an approach. I will examine why the approaches in history and psychology have become at odds, although a large part of their subject matter coincides (i.e. explaining human behaviour). This entails an overview of previous attempts at integrating history and psychology, many of which have failed for various reasons. Furthermore, I contrast psychological methodology with that of other social sciences, most notably economics and sociology, which have in fact successfully incorporated history, historical sources and historical methodology to a larger extent in their body of work.

A distinction can be made between historicizing psychology and psychologizing history. I define historicizing psychology as making use of historical sources, theory and methodology about psychological objects or variables, such as trust or well-being. Psychologizing history means the use of psychology to explain history, such as using psychological theories to explain historical developments. Psychologizing history has been done by several people such as Freud (1930), DeMause (1982) and arguably Elias (1978) with little success. The main focus of this thesis is on historicizing psychology and how that could be achieved, but I also discuss earlier attempts at integrating psychology and history, most of which are efforts at psychologizing history.

The universal model in psychology is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has been well-established that the determinants of a given behavior change over time, such as variables determining the likelihood of protests or demonstrations (Gergen, 1973). Secondly, the universal model, at least for a substantial number of branches of psychology, does not seem to lead to a cumulative body of knowledge, as it does in for instance biology. The replication crisis has shown that many effects that were thought to be robust and well-established in psychology might in fact not exist. Some of these effects might be false-positives (Ioannidis, 2005), others might be more culturally contingent than previously thought, such as attribution bias (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005), and it has been found that several causal relations that might actually exist in psychology suffer from very weak effect sizes, severely limiting their detectability in empirical research (Szucs & Ioannidis, 2017). Thirdly, especially relating to the study of human behaviour, psychology almost completely ignores historical concerns. Historians tend to focus on the changeable parts of human behaviour, such as why a certain revolution, crisis, war, famine, cultural change, demographic change, or institutional change occurred. The historian's approach is almost completely at odds with the psychological model of human behaviour that will look for universals. In history things never happen quite the same; events always have to be contextualized in a certain cultural, political and technological environment. Why then do psychologists and historians, with similar aims to understand the human condition, differ so much with respect to their methodology and assumptions about human behaviour? If the aim is to understand humans, perhaps there should be more overlap and agreement between the two disciplines.

I discuss several attempts at integrating psychology and history. Yet, those attempts have not led to many successful or widely spread incorporations of the historical in psychology,

contrary to other social sciences such as economics and sociology. I argue that this is primarily because of psychology's tendency to look for the universal in human behaviour, while history is exactly about the opposite: the changeable (Hunt, 2014). Psychology as a science has developed a tendency to look for patterns that hold for humans everywhere at all times. History on the other hand explicitly deals with how human life changes over time and across places. Because psychology and history have such an opposing view on how to approach the study of human behaviour, this has not fostered attempts at collaboration (Hunt, 2002).

Despite psychology's reliance on experiments, other social sciences such as sociology, political science and economics employ a greater variety of data sources. Instead of solely using participants in an experiment, it is common practice in these disciplines to use data sources from history (Braudel & Wallerstein, 2009). Both qualitative and quantitative historical data are to various degrees employed in these disciplines to generate or test hypotheses. This is a practice that is largely absent from psychology: it is uncommon to use historical data except when studying the history of psychology. Economic historians, researchers in international relations or historical sociologists on the other hand often make use of historical datasets, such as company records, government documents or anthropological data to test theories generated in their respective fields. This thesis examines whether there is potential for a broader application in psychology of the methods employed in historical enquiry in other social sciences. First, I describe some previous attempts at integrating psychology and history. Due to the scope of this thesis, not every attempt at creating a historical psychology can be discussed and I limit my scope to Freud and later psychologists and I mainly focus on psychologists from Europe and north America. There have been attempts at integrating history and psychology outside of this scope in for instance the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (Cole et al., 1987) and prior

to Freud in the western world with for instance Gustave Le Bon (1895/1995). Second, I explain how historical methodology is used in other social sciences, specifically examining the integration of history and economics, which has been successful and fruitful. Third, I propose that some of these methods can translate well to psychology and argue that a greater incorporation of history in psychology has the potential to enhance our understanding of the human mind and behaviour.

Existing Attempts at Integrating History and Psychology

Some of the earliest attempts at using psychology in historical context are traceable back to Freud (Hunt, 2002). In *Civilization and its discontents* (1930) Freud attempted to explain the friction between individual instincts and civilization's demand for conformity. The book is based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory and includes facets of his Oedipal theory, Eros, Thanatos and the importance of the father figure (and rebellion against it). Freud argues that humans have instincts, most importantly for sex and violence, that can be harmful to human communities. In order to temper these instincts, societies create laws, religion and social norms (collectively these are called civilization) and punish individuals when they violate the rules set out in these institutions. This means that civilization on the one hand acts as a tool to guard against unhappiness (by limiting violent behaviour such as murder), but on the other hand it is the main source of unhappiness for individuals living within it. According to Freud this paradox of civilization leads to the development of neurosis in individuals, as the inherent aggressiveness of individuals is tempered by the development of a super-ego (possibly accompanied by a cultural super-ego as well). Therefore the repression of instincts is the precondition for civilization, yet this process also brings about specific psychological problems, most notably neurosis. "When an

instinctual trend undergoes repression, its libidinal elements are turned into symptoms, and its aggressive components into a sense of guilt" (Freud, 1930, p. 139).

Freud did not only comment on the development of civilizations and applied psychology to a 'general history'. He also believed it was possible to use psychoanalysis to explain the life of historical figures. The most notable work in this vein is *Leonardo da Vinci, A Memory of His Childhood* (Freud, 1910), in which he attempts to retroactively psychoanalyse Leonardo da Vinci's life and works, based on a specific childhood memory. Da Vinci described a memory of being attacked by a vulture in his cradle when he was still very young. According to Freud (1910) this was a childhood fantasy of Da Vinci, based on sucking his mother's nipple, and this experience could explain Da Vinci's alleged homosexual experiences, his interest in the Virgin Mary and his scientific curiosity (Hunt, 2002). This study can be seen as the earliest attempt at psychobiography, applying psychological theory to understand and explain historically significant figures. Yet it also exemplifies several flaws that are common in psychobiography that have been pointed out by critics (Hunt, 2002), most notably the reduction of Da Vinci's entire life to one childhood experience (which according to Freud was also misremembered).

Both Freud's use of psychoanalytic theory to explain developments in civilization, as well as the use of psychoanalysis to explain the lives of historically significant people are approaches which were later applied by other psychologists – primarily psychoanalysts – to history. This led to the establishments of two domains: psychohistory and psychobiography.

Psychobiography

Freud's attempts to understand historical figures through psychoanalyzing their work gained popularity among psychoanalysts and psychologists, especially after the second world

war. Although psychobiographies were written before and after Freud's study of Da Vinci, Murray's (1943) study of Adolf Hitler is often credited with popularizing the field (Schultz, 2005). Murray (1943) used many sources to create a personality profile of Adolf Hitler and successfully predicted that Hitler would commit suicide before Nazi Germany was defeated (although he also asserted that Hitler had homosexual relations, which remains unconfirmed). Murray's (1943) work was influential in that it is often called a pioneering study in criminal profiling and political psychology as well as personality psychology (Schultz, 2005). Subsequently psychobiography has been applied to all kinds of historical figures such as Martin Luther, Mahatma Ghandhi, (Erikson, 1958; 1969), Joseph Stalin (Tucker, 1973) and psychology's own William James (Feinstein, 1984).

This case-study approach differs from general biographies, which are more descriptive and cover a great number of events in a person's life. Instead psychobiography is based on analysing historical figures by collecting (a variety of) sources and focussing on specific events in a person's life, most often events from childhood (Elms, 2007). However, this field has received substantial criticism starting from its inception (Elms, 2007). Criticism frequently levelled at psychobiography is that it uses selective data (i.e. only facts that support the psychobiographer's theory), over-determinism (by relegating the events in a person's life to a specific childhood event or memory such as Freud's Da Vinci study) and retroactively pathologizing people and their behaviour (Elms, 2007). Furthermore, a major criticism is that it is – much like Freud's psychoanalysis – unfalsifiable (Schultz, 2005.). Detailed analysis of an individual's life takes place based on contextual information. Yet because psychobiography relies on limited qualitative data about a person (i.e. diaries, observations of people close to the subject, personal correspondence), direct replications can be done, but without new source

material conceptual replication is impossible. Hence empirically verifying psychobiographical studies is difficult (Schultz, 2005). Given the criticism that psychobiography has received, the method remains controversial and is not widely applied.

Psychohistory

Histories that use psychological theories to explain historical developments can be subsumed under the umbrella term of psychohistory. In the early 1970s the *Journal of Psychohistory* was founded and doctoral studies in psychohistory were offered at some universities (Hunt, 2002). These initial attempts, like psychobiography, were marked by a significant influence of Freudian psychoanalysis and often subscribed to the notion that Freud's claims were objective and scientific, which led to substantial criticism (Hunt, 2002).

One of the most influential figures in the establishment of psychohistory is Lloyd DeMause (Hunt, 2002). DeMause's main contributions to psychohistory are a theory of societal development, based on the relationship between parents and children as well as outlining the field of psychohistory, specifically how it differs from history (DeMause, 1982). According to DeMause, the relationship between history and psychohistory is the same as between astrology and astronomy, where history is 'just' a narrative description of events, but the real science is psychohistory which attempts to explain why events happened (DeMause, 1982). DeMause (1982) takes Hempel as an inspiration, who is known for his position that history should move towards establishing general laws using the deductive-nomological model of scientific explanation. As others have noted (Hunt, 2002), DeMause relies heavily on subjective experience to explain historical developments (1982, pp. 132-133): "Like psychoanalysis, psychohistory uses self-observation of the emotional responses of the researcher as its prime tool for discovery; nothing is ever discovered "out there" until it is first felt "in here"." Using internal

experience, specifically only relying on a researcher's internal experience, has been deemed unscientific for a long time in psychology. The use of introspection as a source of information has been criticized for a long time (Hunt, 2002). Furthermore, as Hunt (2002) points out, DeMause commits history's cardinal sin of anachronism by assuming that his internal experience and motivations would be the same across time and place. Yet I want to take some space to review his work, because I think it serves as an example why interdisciplinary work between history and psychology often failed.

DeMause (1982) sets out two guidelines for psychohistory, calling this perspective the 'psychogenic theory of history'. The first is "That psychohistory is the science of patterns of historical motivations and is based upon an anti-holistic philosophy of methodological individualism" (DeMause, 1982, p. 132). DeMause further explains that instead of sociology and anthropology, which are holistic, psychohistory is individualistic. Additionally, DeMause (1982) makes the extraordinary claim that all historical processes can be explained by the following diagram:

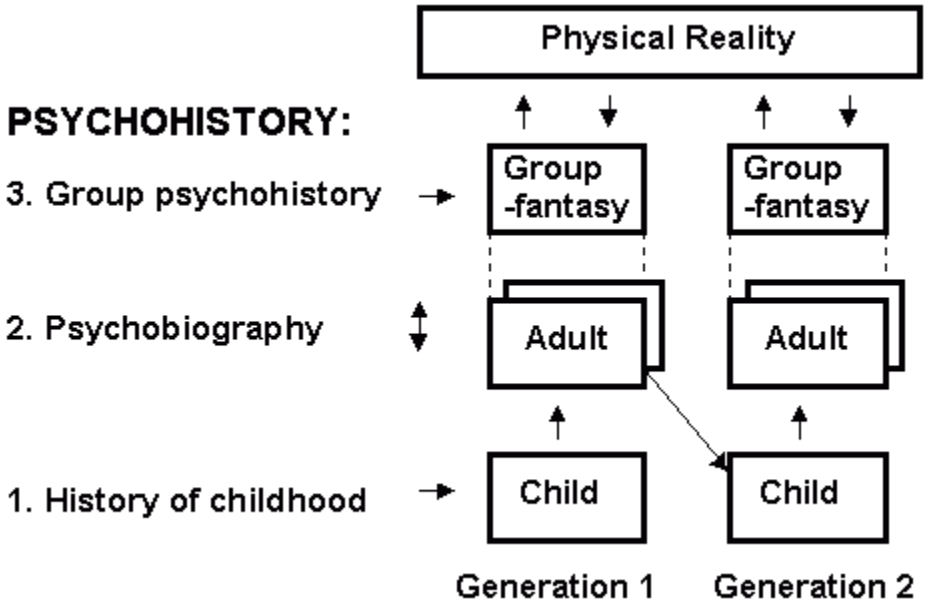

Figure 1: *DeMause's theory of psychogenesis. Sourced from: DeMause, 1982, p. 134.*

The second guideline is (DeMause, 1982, p. 135): "That the ultimate source of all historical change is psychogenesis, the lawful change in childrearing modes occurring through generational pressure". This refers to the other major claim made in DeMause's (1982) 'Foundations of Psychohistory', that childrearing practices have undergone an evolution throughout history and that this is the main historical explanans (DeMause, 1982).

Psychogenesis forms the main basis of the work of DeMause. Though a lot of his writing is quite inaccessible to someone not well-versed in psychoanalysis, it is clear that he views the relationship between parents and their children as essential to the development of (European) history. He identifies four different ways parents relate to their children, and calls these 'modes'. The infanticidal mode is characteristic of a period where child-sacrifice, infanticide, the sale of children and child sodomy were common, as well as a belief in ghosts and magic (DeMause, 1982). The abandoning mode encompasses societies were children were swaddled for longer periods and fosterage such as monasteries and apprenticeships were more common (DeMause,

1982). The ambivalent mode still contains beatings and children were seen as being moldable, often with violence; this period was a precursor to empathy (DeMause, 1982). The intrusive mode is marked by early toilet training, repression of children's sexuality and empathy has evolved as a result of pediatrics (DeMause, 1982). The socializing mode treats children with mental discipline and uses guilt and humiliation for control, the arrival of compulsory schooling is during this period and parents use their children to reach their own (unconscious) goals (DeMause, 1982). Lastly, the helping mode characterizes the recent past where children's rights, free schooling and child therapy become prominent (DeMause, 1982). The description of these periods is based in psychoanalytical work, exemplified by Oedipal struggles between mother and child, the father-figure as a source of rebellion and fear about authority and the importance of early childhood for later development, in this case instead of the individual, the development of societies.

Criticisms of Psychohistory and Psychobiography

The intertwinement of Freudian psychoanalysis with psychohistory has not done the field any favors (Hunt, 2002). After Freud's theories were largely discredited (in a scientific sense) in the early 1990s, the same criticisms befell psychohistory and psychobiography (Hunt, 2002). There were some staunch defenders of the field, yet their attempts to defend psychohistory only served to further illustrate weaknesses in the discipline (Hunt, 2002). Schmidt (1987) argued for instance that the criticism levelled against psychohistory originated from the critics' own inability to deal with the dark sides of the human psyche. The criticism itself was left unaddressed, instead Schmidt (1987) argues that it is the critics' own unwillingness to deal with the dreadful record of human history and shame about human nature and its primitive drives that causes misunderstanding about the discipline.

According to Hunt (2002) most of the criticism levelled against psychohistory was related to a specific issue (p. 340): “the central dilemma of psychohistory: how could historians, who by definition studied the changes in human life, use an approach that emphasized the timeless?” In the vein of Wilhelm Wundt’s experimental psychology, modern psychology focuses on the timeless according to Hunt (2002, pp. 340-341):

> Psychologists emphasized the biological foundations of psychology, relied on studies of behavior carried out in the laboratory setting, preferred quantitative methods of investigation, neglected biographical tools, and ignored most forms of social and cultural, not to mention historical, explanation. Psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on early childhood sexual feelings and clinical study of individual cases in a therapeutic setting, never fitted comfortably into this vision of psychology as a discipline.

Total History and History of Sensibilities

In addition to approaches that originated within psychology, such as psychohistory and psychobiography, other attempts to integrate psychology and history have originated from other disciplines. Notably, historians themselves have also attempted to create histories which focus more on the mental life of the individuals existing at a certain time. Some examples can be traced back to Lucien Febvre and the Annales school of history. The Annales school started as a journal called *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* that Febvre established with his colleague Marc Bloch and was very well received from 1932 to 1938 (Britannica, n.d.). The Annales school became known as a style of historiography that stressed long-term social history and often focused on social scientific methods and economic themes (Britannica, n.d.).

Lucien Febvre pioneered an approach to history known as ‘histoire total’ (total history). ‘Histoire total’ attempted to faithfully recreate the relevant historical environment, by for instance describing the geography, buildings and institutions in which people existed at the time in order to get a better understanding of the outlook of people in their historical context (Febvre, 1941). This included psychological elements as well. Febvre played a large part in the establishment and popularization of the Annales school, which is well-known for its establishment of historiographic methods concerning long-term social change. Febvre cautioned against anachronism, while also emphasizing the need to understand what he called the ‘mental equipment’ that people in history possessed (Hunt, 2002).

Febvre for instance emphasized the role that sensibilities played in history (Hunt, 2002). Sensibilities in Febvre’s work refer to the primacy of various modes of perception and feeling (Wickberg, 2007). The concept of sensibilities was further developed in two ways. The first is sensibilities as emotions and their expressions (Hunt, 2002), which has seen re-emergence in the field known as ‘history of emotions’. Febvre already attempted to understand how emotional experience has differed for people across cultures and time (Barclay, 2021). Contemporary historians of emotion mostly acknowledge some biological basis of emotional experience, yet instead of relying on a general human nature, they see culture as influencing the way that experience is embodied (Barclay, 2021), which is precisely what Febvre attempted to show.

The second interpretation of sensibilities from Febvre’s work is as senses (Smith, 2007), which has been consolidated in the field known as sensory history. Sensory history according to Smith (2007, p. 842) “stresses the role of the senses […] in shaping people’s experience of the past”. This approach, much like the history of emotions, does not assume that the senses are an unchangeable natural endowment. The use of sensory experience by people has changed over time.

For example, in certain historical contexts some senses were seen as superior and others as more base or barbaric (Smith, 2007). Smith (2007) mentions that sensory history is more a habit of thinking about the past than a field of history, as sensory history could be applied to what are traditionally understood as fields in history (e.g. gender, race, military). Smith (2015) himself for instance emphasized the importance of sensory experience, most notably the role that sound played in the U.S. civil war between the industrial, loud North and the pastoral, quiet South. But many examples of the role senses play in historical development are apparent, for instance the interaction between senses and the arrival of technologies such as radio and hearing, television and sight, smartphones and touch.

It could be argued that Febvre was prescient in his prescriptions for a history of sensibilities, because he emphasized that emotions were both individual and social in nature (Hunt, 2002). He argued that people at different times had different mentalities (arguably different psychologies or different minds) and thus he did not argue for a universal theory of emotions (Hunt, 2002). Furthermore, Febvre stated that without understanding sensibilities in their respective historical context, real history is impossible (Hunt, 2002). Febvre went beyond the sensibilities and saw promise in histories of love, death and cruelty as well (Hunt, 2002). What remains somewhat unclear is whether Febvre saw the suppression of emotional activity through civilizing forces as a developmental narrative (Hunt, 2002), similar to the view expounded in Freud's (1930) *Civilization and its discontents* and not unlike deMause's (1982) view of progress on the basis of the relationship between parents and their children. This is unclear because Febvre at times argued that returns to more primal feelings were observable, such as in the wake of the second world war (Hunt, 2002), which does seem to suggest a developmental path for sensory experience.

History of Mentalities and Microhistory

Ideas of Febvre also found a home in other historical subdisciplines. These are the history of mentalities and microhistory, both of which are intimately connected to the Annales school of history. In its broadest sense the history of mentalities concerns itself with the attitudes of ordinary people toward everyday life (Hutton, 1981). The history of mentalities questions what the ideas were that people held about many aspects of life such as childhood, sexuality and death (Hutton, 1981). Mentalities were one of the dimensions that the Annales school attempted to tackle in their ambition to write a total history (Hutton, 1981). The Annales school played a significant role in providing a methodology for the study of mentalities (Hutton, 1981). Instead of focusing on large scale "macro" developments and events, approaches which were used by political and economic historians such as Marxists, scholars from the history of mentalities attempted to limit analysis to a specific time and place. In this way they tried to reconstruct the 'mentalities', worldview or zeitgeist of the people living in a particular place at a particular time, which was not limited to elite members of society. The method used by Annales historians to study mentalities became known as microhistory.

A well-known example of microhistory is the book *The Cheese and the Worms* by Carlo Ginzburg (1976), about the life and religious beliefs of Menocchio, a miller from north-east Italy living from 1532 to 1599. Menocchio's social class was that of a peasant – yet he could read – and he was burned at the stake for his heretical beliefs. Ginzburg (1976) uses historical sources, such as inquisition transcripts of the trial of Menocchio's heresy, in order to reconstruct the religious beliefs of Menocchio. These beliefs, held by a seemingly ordinary and in many ways well-adjusted man, were considered deeply transgressive by the Catholic church at the time. Menocchio believed that instead of God creating the universe, the universe was at first elemental chaos and a 'mass'

formed "just as cheese is made out of milk – and worms appeared in it, and these were the angels" (Ginzburg, 1976, p. 6). One of those angels became God, also created out of this mass. After this, Menocchio's story is relatively faithful to the accepted beliefs by the Catholic church, in particular that Lucifer rose against God and was banished out of heaven (Ginzburg, 1976). Although Ginzburg's work focusses on a specific individual, greater historical trends still figure as a backdrop, most notably the printing revolution and the reformation (Ginzburg, 1976). The printed book allowed Menocchio to engage with these theological ideas in a formalized manner, although oral tradition most likely had a big impact on Menocchio as well, making it difficult to fully trace the origins of his beliefs (Ginzburg, 1976). The reformation moved the boundaries for certain (new) ways of thinking that allowed him to express his ideas and printed books were a novel vehicle for him to engage with theology.

The history of mentalities figures as an interesting development in historiography. Before the Annales school, most history used 'grand narratives', often based in political history and mainly interested in analyzing large-scale developments (e.g. wars, revolutions, institutional change), as can be seen in for instance historical materialism (Hunt, 2002). The history of mentalities instead attempts use a much smaller-scale analysis, starting with historically situated individuals, hence the name of their primary method: microhistory. The history of mentalities is inherently psychological in nature as the focus of the field is on beliefs, attitudes and ideas that ordinary people had about the world in which they lived. Yet, contrary to experimental psychology, it did not aim to provide an overarching explanation for why people do certain things across time and places, but instead it focusses on a specific case which is explored in great detail. Microhistory is an attempt to reconstruct – to the best of our abilities – the world in which those people existed. In that sense it shares a lot with qualitative approaches in psychology. Rather than testing theories,

microhistory serves more as an observational tool that allows for theory generation, by uncovering how people related to the world around them. The history of mentalities is thus not only unique in its move away from a focus on elite members of society, which characterizes 'grand narrative' histories, but also in that it does not necessarily aim to explain why people had a specific worldview (e.g. by using longer-term technological or institutional developments to explain why people held certain beliefs).

Norbert Elias and the Civilizing Process

Norbert Elias was a sociologist who in 1939 published *The civilizing process*, a book that attempted to explain the development of Western European states from the early medieval period until the 20th century. The book is split in two volumes, the first volume, called *The history of manners*, traces the history of manners and developments in etiquette. This process culminates in the development of self-restraint, similar to Freud's (1930) arguments that the development of the super-ego was a result of cultural processes. The second volume examines the development of the state with a focus on centralization mechanisms such as the monopoly on violence and increased administrative systems for taxation and the military. Important to note is that Elias did not assume that the civilizing process was unique to Western societies, nor that this process only started during the medieval era (Elias, 1939). Elias work is interesting because it can be seen as continuing the trend that Freud started with *Civilization and its discontents* (1930), namely viewing the history of Western Europe as that of a 'civilizing process', whereby human base instincts need to be overcome. For Freud (1930) the repression of Eros and Thanatos through the super-ego (and the cultural and political institutions affecting it) is the root cause of psychological problems. For Elias, the subconscious and the id do not figure as prominently as for Freud. However, like Freud, he argues that political developments in Western Europe are

intimately tied to developments in the self, both of these together form the civilizing process (Elias, 1939).

From a historical psychological perspective the first volume is the most relevant. Elias thought that the self had a history: the self-contained individual as we know it today is the result of a development that started in the fourteenth century (Hunt, 2002). Elias argued that shame, self-repression and an associated awareness of norm violation did not exist to the same extent during the early medieval period (Elias, 1939). He gives examples of practices that were acceptable in the early Middle ages such as sharing cutlery or bowls and blowing one's nose in public without use of a handkerchief, but also using violence against one's servants (Elias, 1939). These are all practices that in Europe during the middle ages became improper when social norms were instituted against them. According to Elias, this increase in restraint in social behaviors is indicative of a fundamental transformation in self-hood (Hunt, 2002). The individual's boundaries as well as instincts were to be respected (Hunt, 2002).

Elias attempted to show that he believed there was an intimate connection between developments in the Western world of self-regulation and the integration of social structures (i.e. modernization), which is the focus of the second volume. Self-regulation is characterized by people showing increased restraint and emotional control. It is not only an individual process as stricter social norms were internalized, but also a collective process that institutionalized these norms at an aggregate level (what Freud would perhaps call a collective super-ego). As Powell (2014, p. 3) notes: "A key aspect here is that society cannot be separated from the individual. Rather, social forces are in fact forces exerted by people; forces exerted over themselves and others: social constraints become self-restraints." Modernization was characterized by the development of nation states as the most sovereign entities with increased centralized power.

These states gained the ability to perform modern functions of nation states, such as a monopoly on violence, taxation and bureaucratic structures (Powell, 2014). Most of these states were established under the principles of sovereignty in the treaty of Westphalia (Elias, 1939). For Elias the developments in self-regulation run parallel with this sociogenesis of the state. It is not obvious whether Elias believed modernization was causing increasing self-regulation or vice versa, rather he emphasized that both aspects, mental and political were part of the same 'civilizing process'.

Elias believed that psychological history was an integral part of many post-medieval developments. The formal institutional developments that have taken place in post-medieval Europe have been thoroughly studied (see e.g. North, 1990). However, to what extent people's 'psychology' has changed is much less studied. Arguably Elias makes a distinction between the psychology of people pre-modernization (decreased restraint, little attention to hygiene, more accepting of violence) and post-modernization. This is an interesting proposition, yet something that experimental psychologists with randomized controlled trials could never study, which is part of the reason why history-based psychology never took off. To modern psychologists, Elias' thesis is unfalsifiable and hence not relevant knowledge, but I think psychologists should give more attention to these types of psychological histories.

Historical Ontology

Foucault used the term historical ontology to describe 'things coming and going out of being', yet only used it sparingly (Sugarman, 2009). More recently the concept of historical ontology has been applied by Ian Hacking (2002) to describe a philosophy that uses history to confront philosophical problems (Sugarman, 2009). It is a kind of philosophy specifically related to investigating how historical circumstances impact epistemological questions or concerns, or as

Sugarman (2009, p. 6) puts it: “historical ontology looks to styles of reasoning as epistemological means with ontological consequences.” It investigates the space of possibilities (history) in which styles of reasoning (epistemology) are able to constitute objects (ontology).

Hacking (2002) has shown that historical ontology is extremely relevant for psychology, because the phenomena that psychology concerns itself with are more susceptible to dynamic nominalism than other disciplines. Dynamic nominalism examines how descriptive practices (nominalism) can interact with the things that are named (dynamic). Psychology classifies, examines and makes inferences about human beings, and psychological description of people allows those people to react to those descriptions (Sugarman, 2009). This is a concern that is present in other forms of categorization and description in science. Yet for instance categorizing and describing a specific rock, as is done in geology, elicits less of a dynamic response than the same process for people. Hence, dynamic nominalism is a concern that is most applicable in psychology.

Hacking (2002) uses a wide variety of examples to show that classifications of people that are derived from psychology (e.g. adolescence, autism, homosexuality, suicide, multiple personality disorder) have produced behaviors and experiences in the people that are classified, creating new ways of personhood and existence. Additionally, according to Hacking (1995) there is a notable historical dimension to these ‘ways of being’. He demonstrated this for example in an essay in which he traces the diagnostic category multiple personality disorder (MPD). According to Hacking (1995) it is only because of certain historical path-dependencies that MPD could come into being as a means of engaging with the world. He traces the origins of MPD to the late 18th century, yet in 1972 there had been few known cases, while fourteen years later some 6000 cases had been diagnosed years (Hacking, 1995). Hacking argues that more attention

from clinicians working in mental health, but also increased media attention raised awareness of the condition and MPD became a kind of mental illness, a process he calls semantic contagion (Hacking, 1995). MPD became a new kind of thing that a person could have, it "provided a new way to be an unhappy person" (Hacking, 1995, p. 236). It is important to note that for Hacking (1995), the fact that MPD was to some extent created by social forces (e.g. experts and media attention) does not mean that it is not 'real'. Instead of using terms such as real, Hacking discusses the persistence of some 'ways of being' or categories of being, arguing that some are more durable than others.

Hacking's ideas can help structure the abovementioned attempts at integrating history and psychology. Freud and Elias are similar in that they attempt to explain institutional developments in society, such as modernity and civilization in conjunction with developments in the self or the mind. Although causality remains somewhat obscure in the work of Elias, he did emphasize that post-medieval Europeans were a different 'kind' of person, with attention to self-regulation and hygiene. This is similar to Freud's claim that people in modern society have to face contradictions between base instincts and societal norms, which can lead to psychological problems that did not exist before. Lloyd deMause mainly takes ideas from Freud about the relationship between parents and their children and uses these to categorize history, indicating that there might be patterns whereby children and parents adopt roles and identities, again making and unmaking 'kinds of being'. The Annales school on the other hand distinguishes itself by their methodology and narrow instead of broad focus from other historical schools, providing a toolkit that could allow psychologists interested in history to engage in qualitative historical research.

Lessons from Economic History

Economic History and Psychology

There has been little attention from psychologists for developments in economic history[1], which is peculiar because many theories in economic history employ psychological variables directly or make use of psychological theories and mechanisms to explain differences in for instance income levels. Various variables that are to an extent psychological are being employed by economic historians, not only as determinants (e.g. intelligence, educational outcomes, health), but also as outcomes (e.g. trust). Moreover, not only have economic historians studied psychological variables, but they also used them to explain historical developments such as institutionalization processes (North, 1991) and the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Nunn, 2008). Below I discuss trust and briefly family life as examples of the use of psychological variables by economic historians.

Trust

One strand of research in economic history that has intimate ties to psychology is research on trust. Trust is a psychological variable, which can be defined in many ways. For instance trust in a relationship could entail open communication and transparency. Most often in economic research it is defined as a situation where "individuals and organisations have the confidence to co-operate with one another without needing government assistance" (Coleman,

[1] Behavioural economics is an area where psychology and economics overlap, yet it also tends to be ahistorical due to the same focus on experimental settings. Behavioural economists mostly use experimental methods to test whether people behave in-line with economic assumptions. This field led to novel findings on for instance how humans perceive risk (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) and how that deviates from assumptions in rational choice theory. In this collaboration between psychology and economics, it has primarily been the application of randomized controlled trials in economics to show whether a certain hypothesized mechanism exists. Thus, behavioural economics uses psychological methods to assess economic behaviour, rather than psychologists using the tools of economists.

1997). Although defined in this way as almost an aggregate situation where trust is a societal variable, it is most often measured on an individual level with general trust questions, such as in the World Value Survey (Haerpfer et al., 2020). Hence trust apparently boils down to an individual level experience: whether people feel they can trust one another. A variable and process that is intimately psychological. This has often been studied in tandem with well-being, which is another psychological variable that is widely employed in economic research. Although its definition and measurement are much debated, in a broad sense well-being attempts to capture things like quality of life, happiness, possibilities of living a fulfilling life, and a sense of purpose, arguably all very important parts of psychological life.

Douglass North, who is one of the primary figures in institutional economics and who stressed the importance of culture for economic development (1991), also emphasized the importance of trust for contract enforcement and its subsequent effects on economic development, arguing that: “the inability of societies to develop effective, low-cost enforcement of contracts […] is the most important source of both historical stagnation and contemporary underdevelopment in the Third World.” (North, 1990, p. 54). North (1991) in his work repeatedly emphasized that there was a crucial role of culture, norms and values for economic development; he collectively called these informal institutions. He even argued that these might be more important for the long-run development of societies than more measurable formal institutions such as laws (North, 1991). According to him trust is an essential component for the efficient functioning of contracts, and efficient contracts are a pivotal requirement for the functioning of modern societies (North, 1991).

Trust has always figured prominently in economic discourse. Even Adam Smith (1766), who is often considered the father of economics, already touched on the importance of trust in

economic interactions and also highlighted differing degrees of trust across countries, calling for instance the Dutch the most trusting. Zak and Knack (2001) show that there are significant differences across countries when it comes to trusting others. In some Scandinavian and other northern European cities it might be possible to leave your bicycle unlocked or even your stroller with a baby outside while shopping with little risk (Zak and Knack, 2001). In other cities such as New York, where many people do not even leave their dog tied up on the sidewalk, this would be completely unheard of (Zak and Knack, 2001).

In game theory, trust plays a central role as well. Game theory uses several assumptions to model what participants will do in non-cooperative games. These assumptions tend to boil down to a rigid self-interest and a capability to process relevant information. The goal of participants in these types of games is to use the information they have about their opponent to arrive at a strategy. When every player has arrived at a strategy and cannot increase their expected payoff by changing strategy (given that the other participants do not change their strategy), then both players are in a Nash equilibrium. Nash (1951) further showed that for every finite game, there is a Nash equilibrium.

Game theory has subsequently been applied to all sorts of collective action problems, such as nuclear war, voting and public goods. Yet, when the hypotheses generated by game theory are empirically tested on regular people in laboratory settings, most people actually do not follow the strategies which can be derived from the Nash equilibrium, even when they and their opponent are anonymous (Smith, 1998), suggesting that people generally do not solely behave according to self-interest and show pro-social behaviour, even in contexts where this might be unexpected. Of course in some contexts such as nuclear war or some business interactions where

there are clear parties with extreme self-interest and strategic behaviour, game theory can be helpful in predicting the outcome of interactions (if the context is well-defined).

Zak and Knack (2001) attempt to create a model for trust based on the interaction between consumers and brokers (a form of principle-agent problems), where brokers might cheat the consumers and it is not immediately obvious to the consumer which brokers might cheat them (although they know that some brokers might). Thus, consumers need to make a decision on how much effort (e.g. time and money) is spent investigating their broker and what degree of trust consumers have in their broker (Zak and Knack, 2001). Having to spend more effort to evaluate the trustworthiness of your broker is considered detrimental to economic growth, since this requires additional resources. Zak and Knack (2001) also acknowledge that formal institutions, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States and the judicial system can reduce the amount of cheating brokers and reduce the extent to which cheating brokers cheat. In addition to that they also highlight the role of informal institutions such as reputational effects on brokers. Guilt, as a consequence of violating social norms, 'afterlife sanctions', as are common in religion, social sanctions, such as exclusion and reputational effects that reduce future profits, can all affect the likelihood (and extent) of brokers to cheat (Zak and Knack, 2001). Since these transactions occur within a social structure, that social structure can help to determine the rewards and penalties for cooperation or deviation, which in economics is called the embeddedness of economic actions. Here, Zak and Knack (2001, p. 5) tangentially mention that: "Psychologists attribute this embeddedness to a need to belong to a social group, which provides an evolutionary advantage in survival and reproduction", citing Baumeister and Leary (1995).

Zak and Knack (2001), after mathematically formalizing their model, go on to test their hypotheses regarding the role of trust using the World Value Survey among 41 market economies across 3 time periods. Trust is measured in the World Value Survey in several ways, with the most commonly employed trust measure based on the statement that 'most people can be trusted' versus 'you can't be too careful in dealing with people'. Variation in this statement is large, with Norway exhibiting trust 'levels' of more than 60 percent, versus a country such as Peru, which only has a trust level of around 5 or 6 percent (Zak and Knack, 2001). They find that cheating is more likely and trust is lower when social distance between consumers is larger, formal institutions are less developed, social sanctions are less effective and the amount invested is larger (Zak and Knack, 2001). Hence, they are able to show that when both formal and informal institutions are weaker this adversely impacts income growth of a country. They go on to cite John Stuart Mill (1848, p. 131) that "the advantage to mankind of being able to trust one another, penetrates into every crevice and cranny of human life: the economical is perhaps the smallest part of it, yet even this is incalculable". Thus, they expect that other more holistic measures of well-being are likely associated with trust in the same way as income growth and investment (Zak and Knack, 2001). Again, Zak and Knack (2001) not only comment on a psychological variable, trust, and its relation to economic development, but go beyond that and argue that it is likely that more trusting societies experience more well-being, thereby establishing a relationship between two variables, trust and well-being, that are arguably wholly psychological in nature.

Research on trust has also been used in more applied settings, specifically using trust as a variable to explains specific historical developments. Examples are studies by Nunn (2008) and Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) that investigate the influence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on

the development level of African countries. In order to substantiate his findings, Nunn (2008) provides evidence of a major mechanism which could have been at play: ethnic fractionalization. In a subsequent publication, it is highlighted that individuals in Africa nowadays, whose ancestors were more heavily affected by the slave trade, still exhibit higher mistrust towards group members and society at large (Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011).

The relationship between historical slave trade and contemporary mistrust is based on channels that consist of cultural norms, beliefs and values (Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011). This is because according to Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) a culture of mistrust evolved as a consequence of slave trade, as members of the same group (for instance family members or friends) started turning on one another as the slave trade progressed. Hence, crucial to their theory is the fact that cultural norms of mistrust evolved as a response to the slave trade. Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) argue that in an environment where information seeking is costly, heuristic decision making tends to be an optimal strategy and that within communities that are more heavily affected by slave trade a culture of mistrust is more likely to arise. They find evidence that among the contemporary descendants of ethnic groups which were more heavily affected by slave trade, greater mistrust is exhibited towards relatives, neighbours, people from the same ethnic group and local government (Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011). This indicates that these norms are quite persistent, even more than 100 years after the slave trade has ended (Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011). At least one study has replicated the findings of Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) using more recent data which covers additional African countries and additional ethnic groups (Deconick & Verpoorten, 2012).

Clearly, the mechanism as well as variables of interest presented above are psychological in nature. Furthermore, it is evident that theories from social psychology, for instance pertaining

to in-group-out-group differences (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1982) should be able to help make sense of these kinds of findings. However, there has been scant attention to developments in economic history by psychologists and vice versa. This is striking since Nunn (2022) confirms one of his primary interests is explaining human behaviour, primarily as it relates to culture. He uses the definition by Boyd and Richerson (1985, p. 4): "Culture is information capable of affecting individuals' behaviour that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission." In this definition culture is clearly defined in relation to human behaviour, while 'acquiring culture' is also described through psychological processes such as teaching and imitation. Therefore, psychological knowledge should be incorporated into his ideas and psychologists should engage with these types of theories.

The Role of Family Organisation and Society

Developmental and family psychology are other fields which contain elements that are particularly important for economic historians and vice versa. The effects of staying with parental family longer have been acknowledged in economic history. There is an interesting example from the Black Death (the plague that hit European and African countries in the mid-14th century), where patterns in marriage behaviour are explained as a consequence of the mortality caused by the disease. Voigtländer and Voth (2013) show that the Black Death killed somewhere between a third or half of the human population of Europe. This major demographic shift (which occurred in less than 10 years) caused a massive shift in land-labour ratios, making labour more scarce. This in turn led to changes in the production structure of agriculture; labour-intensive grain production was shifted out for land-intensive pastoral production (Voigtländer & Voth, 2013). Furthermore, according to Voigtländer and Voth (2013), since pastoral production is physically less intense, this gave women a comparative advantage in the sector. Because

women's employment opportunities increased, this incentivized women to delay marriage and fertility was reduced, thereby reducing population pressure in a Malthusian sense, leading to what is now known as the 'European Marriage Pattern' (Voigtländer & Voth, 2013). These studies highlight that marital behaviour is influenced by economic, demographic and sociological circumstances that might favour a specific marriage pattern over others. Furthermore, it highlights that changes in marriage patterns can be partially explained by historical circumstances.

Contrasting Psychology and Economic History

The studies in economic history on trust, culture and the role of the family cited here all contain psychological components in a historical context. Yet economic historians do not particularly pay a lot of attention to developments in psychology, nor do psychologists pay particular attention to these studies. There is more evidence of interdisciplinary cooperation between economic historians and sociologists or political scientists (see e.g. Alesina & Giuliano, 2010). Psychologists have not responded to many studies in economic history and psychology remains dominated by laboratory experiments (where a substantial caveat remains as to the generalizability of these studies to past human behaviour). Some psychologists diverge from only using randomized control trials, mostly in the form of qualitative studies which also tend to be focused on humans in the present. The assumption of universality of behavioural determinants (as explained earlier) in psychology suggests that the findings about contemporary human behaviour should in most cases be applicable to the past (e.g. in-group out-group dynamics most likely existed across most of history). Much of the body of psychology, however, has not been used by historians to explain historical developments, contrary to a science such as sociology or economics. If indeed psychological mechanisms identified by modern psychologists hold across

time and societies, then one would expect that historians would take up psychological theory to explain human behaviour, yet this remains rare.

The replication crisis in psychology has shown that some findings about human behaviour are not universal. Several prominent studies find effects, such as attribution bias, that can only be replicated in particular contexts (Mezulis et al., 2004). Attribution bias is the tendency of people to systematically use different explanations when evaluating their own versus others' behaviour (Mezulis et al., 2004). This was long thought to be a rather universal human bias, however some studies have suggested that across cultures, there are differences in the extent to which extent people 'have' attribution bias (Mezulis et al., 2004). Partially this might be because many studies in psychology use participants that are from WEIRD (White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) countries and thus are prone to categorize some traits as universal, when in fact they only hold within a specific cultural context. Similar to criticism on cross-cultural validity of psychological findings, criticism on cross-temporal validity of psychological findings can be made on the same basis. People from the (distant) past are not the same people as were used in the experiment.

Theoretical Concerns on Historical Psychology

Social Psychology as History

One paper which explicitly deals with the changeability of psychological theories, specifically in the context of social psychology, is 'social psychology as history' by Kenneth Gergen (1973). Gergen (1973) argues that one of the main aims of science is to find stable relationships (or general laws) through systematic observation. For social psychology these laws should describe and explain social interaction. According to Gergen (1973) this way of

approaching science has fared very well for the natural sciences, which deal with aspects of nature that are generally highly stable over time (e.g. the velocity of falling bodies). In this vein, he argues that if the laws describing the velocity of falling bodies would change over time, then natural science would be replaced by natural history (Gergen, 1973). Social psychology and the principles of human interaction are subject to historical changes and hence searching for (universal) laws guiding those interactions is futile (Gergen, 1973).

One of the aspects of social science is that the subjects of study transmit ‘messages’ to scientists, who have to decode these using scientific theories (Gergen, 1973). However, not only does the scientist interpret these messages, scientists also communicate their theories to the general public (Gergen, 1973). What is often held in psychology is that communicating psychological knowledge in this way does not alter the underlying causal relationships of theories. Yet, Gergen (1973) argues that the development of psychological principles can in fact invalidate them.

According to Gergen there are three influences that affect the generalizability of psychological theory. The first is that psychological theory tends to have a prescriptive bias. Whereas psychological theories often want to be descriptive in nature, some carry normative implications, such as authoritarianism or Machiavellianism (Gergen, 1973) and people generally resist and do not appreciate being labelled in a negative way.

The second is that a primary tenet of experimental design remains that subjects must remain naïve to the theory being tested (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1966), otherwise they might adapt their behaviour, thereby ‘invalidating’ the theory (Gergen, 1973). There is an apparent contradiction here as many psychologists research a theory to actually effect some societal change. An example is the bystander effect, which refers to a situation where responsibility for

taking action is avoided because of other bystanders. If one becomes aware of the bystander effect, one might change one's behaviour to escape the bystander effect. This is actually often one of the primary takeaways of bystander studies as many of these studies attempt to uncover attenuating factors that reduce the bystander effect (Fischer et al., 2011). It should be obvious that this is contradictory with the earlier mentioned aim of social psychology to find stable relationships. If awareness of a relationship changes the relationship, then it is no longer stable.

The third influence affecting generalizability is that at least in western culture, the development of autonomy is considered of utmost importance (Gergen, 1973). Yet Gergen (1973, p. 313) argues that: "Valid theories about social behaviour constitute significant implements of social control." Therefore psychological knowledge may pose a threat for those who are unaware of it (Gergen, 1973). they could be manipulated by sophisticated marketeers, social engineers and government campaigns who know about psychological principles and can use them to effect change in those people's behaviour. Given the fact that freedom and autonomy are considered important in the western world, it should be no surprise that people can (and most likely will) agitate against theories describing their behaviour, thereby invalidating those theories (Gergen, 1973).

Gergen (1973) also notes that predictors of psychological phenomena in fact change over time, contrary to universal laws. For instance he mentions that the variables that successfully predicted activism during the beginning of the Vietnam war are not the same predictors as during the later stages of that war. Hence, it seems that people at different times in history can be motivated to do the same action by different motivators. Therefore it seems unfeasible to create a theory of activism that will universally hold across time (and cultures).

According to Gergen (1973), given the facts outlined above, knowledge about social interactions cannot be accumulated as in the natural sciences. This means that social psychology is primarily a historical endeavour and that social psychology as it is practiced now (with its heavy reliance on laboratory experiments) is in essence a systematic accounting of contemporary affairs which will likely not hold in the future (Gergen, 1973). However, Gergen (1973) does caveat this claim with the fact that there is likely a 'continuum of historical durability'; for instance people across history tend to avoid painful stimuli regardless of the historical context, so pain avoidance would have a high degree of historical durability, whereas the determinants of activism might have a low degree of historical durability.

An interesting addition here is that, as Gergen (1973) mentions, it indeed seems to be the case that the interests of social psychology are also historically contingent. Gergen (1973) mentions an increase in research on activism during the Vietnam war protests, psychologists seemingly paid more attention to the determinants of activism during a period where activism itself was more prolific, likely due to greater media attention, on-campus sentiment and developments within the youth culture of that era. Another well-known example is the attention towards authoritarianism, fascism and obedience in the wake of the second world war. Three famous studies conducted between 1951 and 1971 are Asch' conformity experiment (1951), Milgram's experiment (1963) and Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment (1971). Without commenting on the veracity of these studies and their findings, all three share an attention towards conformity, obedience and roll adoption.

Psychology studies the impact of historical events, but only when these are recent. It seems that psychology (like many sciences) is susceptible to fads. Once certain social developments become popularly known, psychologists start attempting to understand them. In

itself, this tendency for psychologists to focus on salient topics is not an issue and science as a whole is susceptible to certain trends, yet social psychologists should be aware of the fact that the generalizability of their studies, especially across time is highly problematic. In order to address that problem, the answer might lie in a greater attention towards history.

The Usefulness of Psychological Theory for Historical Explanation

It is worthwhile to question whether a psychological perspective on recent historical developments is useful to explain those developments. For the second world war, it is unlikely that the behaviour of those participating in Nazi Germany can primarily be explained by processes of conformity and obedience as attempted by Milgram and Zimbardo. Rather it seems that many other historical, political and economic forces have exerted a great influence on the rise of Nazi Germany. Fascism in general was popular before the second world war and during that time in Europe it was much more accepted to question what the best form of government is. This is attested by flourishing intellectual discussion on how society should be organized with the main perspectives in Europe being democracy, communism and fascism (Miller, 1937). In addition to that, there was a thriving international eugenics community (at the time seen as a progressive program), that enabled the idea that the elimination of certain people(s) out of the gene pool would improve society for the rest (Dikötter, 1998). Germany had lost world war one and this had grave consequences for her political and economic power. The treaty of Versailles forced Germany into high reparation payments, this forced the Weimar Republic to print more money which in turn led to hyperinflation, the occupation of the Ruhr area by France and the collapse of the German economy in 1931 (Pettifor, 2019). Many historians argue that these are the main forces that made Germany uniquely susceptible to a fascist strongman. In the general historical narrative on how Germany became Nazi Germany, psychological processes such as

obedience and conformity do not seem to play any role in explaining why Nazi Germany came to be. This should lead psychologists to ask themselves whether their theories in fact assist in understanding historical developments.

It seems much more likely that the relationships identified by social psychologists are contingent upon some boundary conditions. For instance, obedience and conformity might be more pronounced under certain (historical and/or cultural) circumstances; an obvious one would be living in a culture where respectively harmony or individualism is valued. Moreover, the social organisation of society likely has influence on these relationships, if a society is feudal this will have consequences for the obedience and conformity behaviour of people within that society (and what their role or class is, e.g. clergy, serfs or rulers). Yet social psychologists seemingly disregard these influences, by arguing that the behaviours identified in contemporary participants in the lab are universal. Furthermore, the social psychologist tends to assert that the behaviours recorded in experiments have always existed and always occurred because of the same reasons that are reproduced in the lab, which is highly problematic. Several social psychological theories are not cross-culturally robust, such as attribution bias (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005). Social psychologists should similarly question whether their theories are historically robust, since obviously cultures and people can change over time.

Conclusion

As other social sciences have shown, historical sources and methods can be drawn on to generate insights in their respective fields of interest. Economic historians have for a long time successfully collaborated with historians. On the one hand this has led to economic explanations for historical events. On the other hand economists have used history to test economic theory, for instance by testing economic theories over increasingly long timespans, as estimates of wealth

and income have become more accurate. This even holds for the distant past, as some estimates now exist for even 0 CE (Maddison Project Database, 2020). In addition to now being able to test over longer timespans, economic historians have also developed their own theories about how modern societal organizations came about and what this process might have looked like. This approach is mostly in-line with what Douglas North (1991) and similar researchers have done. Especially the development of formal institutions and the trade-offs made by societies to arrive at modern institutional arrangements have received a lot of attention (North, 1990). This symbiotic relationship between history and economics can also be found in sociology. Figurational sociologists such as Norbert Elias have drawn from multidisciplinary toolkits to create overarching narratives of how modern societies have come into being.

The relationship between psychology and history on the other hand has seen more upheavals. In the past, collaborations based on psychoanalysis have dominated this relationship. I think that because of its association with the more subjective, psychoanalytic forms of psychology, this relationship has soured. As experimental psychology became the primary way of doing psychology in most countries of the world, psychologists themselves have neglected earlier collaborations with history due to the limits of their methodological toolkit, while historians have criticized the methods of the psychohistorians (Hunt, 2002). Both Freud and Lloyd deMause's theories were too ambitious in their attempts to create a separate psychohistory. Freud and deMause's work positions itself as a whole new way of doing history, instead of engaging with established history. Furthermore, they are both too eager to accept their own theorizing as fact, rather than critically evaluating their own theories. However, both use an interesting starting point for historical theory, the family unit. A perspective that is worthwhile to look at for psychologists interested in history.

The Annales school on the other hand has produced historical work about psychological themes with success. Their work is firmly rooted in historical methods, as Febvre and his colleagues were trained as historians. Furthermore, their attempts aligned well with their methods. By using microhistory they were not trying to establish a grand psychological narrative of history, or to explain hundreds of years of developments (like Freud, DeMause and Elias). Instead microhistory allowed them to more faithfully recreate the historical circumstances of a certain person, place or time. Thereby also allowing insights into how new ways of interacting with, thinking about or being in the world can arise (as in the case of Menocchio).

When it comes to thinking about historical patterns that affect 'ways of being' in the world, historical ontology and the work of Hacking (1995) are highly informative. I would like to think that Hacking's (1995) observations about dynamic nominalism can serve as a meta-theoretical framework where a psychological history could position itself. As Hacking (1995) notes, psychologists themselves play an important part in creating new 'kinds' of people. This is most obvious when discussing mental health diagnostics and how those categories have changed over the years. But in a broader sense psychologists constantly provide new vocabularies, theories, conscious and unconscious processes and influences that continue to make and unmake people. First of all, for any psychological researcher it is important to be aware of the constant dynamic nominalism that is going on. But secondly, I also think this provides new ways of studying how new kinds of people arise across time. This in itself could be an entire discipline, where historical sources are being used to review how people define themselves. I think you could even go so far as to say that psychologies change over time. We know that every person has ideas about the world around them, which to an extent influences their experience of the world. For instance the perception of danger is partially a learned experience, where you might

respond very differently to certain kinds of people or things based on what you are taught (those kinds of people or things are dangerous, these kinds are not).

If we want to be able to say anything about the psychology of a person in the past, it is clear we have to rely on historical sources and methods. It is simply impossible to use randomized controlled trials to arrive at reliable knowledge about people in the past. However, I do think methods from economic history can be applied and in fact already are being applied to psychological variables. Trust, well-being and family life are just a few discussed in this thesis where research has been building for decades. Quantitative psychological history is already being done, psychologists just have not been involved as much. Institutional economics also highlights that informal restraints such as beliefs, norms and values are essential to the development of modern societies. Yet research on these topics is lagging, psychological history would be well-positioned to help inform institutional economists about developments in informal institutions, thereby creating a more cohesive overview of the impact of institutional development, both formal and informal.

In order to arrive at a psychological history, psychologists will have to broaden their methodological toolkit. First of all, this entails learning how to deal with historical sources. Qualitative psychology can serve as a guide here, as qualitative psychologists are already well-versed in dealing with texts. Similar to how contemporary text sources have to be contextualized, historical texts have to be contextualized as well. Furthermore, microhistory and subsequent writing by authors such as Foucault has laid a lot of the groundwork for how to do such contextualization. Secondly, I think there is ample room for a quantitative historical psychology as well, like economic historians are already doing. Historical quantitative data sources exist and authors such as Nunn (2008) show how it is possible to cleverly make use of such data by using

statistical tools such as instrumental variable analysis. Using those approaches it becomes possible to do statistical testing on the effects of historical developments, such as slavery, on the people and their descendants that were affected by those historical developments. Furthermore, even in cases where historical data on a variable such as trust does not exist, by cleverly using instrumental variable analysis scholars such as Nunn (2008) are able to present evidence for causal connections between slavery, its effect on trust then and now and contemporary economic development. Psychologists should be more open to these kinds of quantitative approaches, in addition to experiments and qualitative studies. Randomized controlled trials in historical settings are often just impossible. Yet, simply because we cannot do randomized controlled trials on people who existed in the past, does not mean knowledge about those people is outside of the realm of psychology. Those past behaviours and people are in fact also part of psychology, psychologists just have not found the methods to study and gain knowledge about them.

Gergen (1973) ended his article with a message on moving towards an integrated social history I would like to echo here:

> It has been maintained that social psychological research is primarily the systematic study of contemporary history. As such, it seems myopic to maintain disciplinary detachment from (a) the traditional study of history and (b) other historically bound sciences (including sociology, political science, and economics). The particular research strategies and sensitivities of the historian could enhance the understanding of social psychology, both past and present. […] Political, economic, and institutional factors are all necessary inputs to understanding in an integrated way. A concentration on psychology alone provides a distorted understanding of our present condition. (p. 319)

Gergen understood that people did not always perform the same behaviours, and that the same behaviours in two time periods are not necessarily performed because of the same reasons. Some authors take Gergen's claims even further. Not only have behaviours changed over time, ways of being a person have changed as well (Hacking, 1995). Perhaps what we refer to when we talk about psychology is in fact subject to change, i.e. did people in the past have the same 'psychology' (i.e. the same mind, the same guiding processes of behaviour and thought and ways of being) as people that exist now?

Gergen's (1973) concept of historical durability can help us make sense of the degree to which psychological life can be changeable. Some psychological phenomena (e.g. pain avoidance) might be more historically durable than other phenomena (e.g. fundamental attribution error). Since homo sapiens existed, there have been shared features of humans. We can assume that some human drives are universal, such as the need for food and warmth. Yet the ways in which humans dealt with these drives differ radically over time. Whereas fire used to be crucial to survival in many places of the world, now large parts of the industrialized world rely on central heating and building insulation. It is apparent that humans can address some needs in various, changeable ways. New ways to satisfy old needs can be invented and perhaps altogether new desires can arise over time. For instance, we can assume that physiologically the eye was not radically different a thousand years ago. Yet what people saw a thousand years ago was most likely very different from what we see. Not only in the literal sense that environments have changed radically by for instance urbanization, mechanized vehicles and infrastructure, but also in what caught their attention. What was salient to people in the past does not have to be salient for people now. In order to be able to use the different lenses through which psychologists can start to view humans in different lights, the 'paradigmatic assumptions' about the universality of

human psychology that are widespread in contemporary psychology must first be critically examined and possibly altered or broadened, before these lenses can be used.

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