Kurt Lewin’s integration of psychological theory and research practice is seen as a tradition living in feminist theory and practice today. Three narratives, drawn from (a) the feminist academy, (b) the history of ethology and contemporary sociobiology, and (c) the life of T. C. Schneirla, demonstrate the concept of “... personal is political is personal..." The feminist concept and practice of consciousness raising and the theoretical slogan “personal is political” make fundamental contributions to active psychology and societal activity. The narratives also remind us that realistic commitment to the integration of theory and practice through political action may be personally risky.

Introduction

A business man stated that ‘there is nothing as practical as a good theory.’

*Kurt Lewin, 1943, p. 118*

Lewin exemplified the integration of theory and practice, and of the personal and the political. “He was a socially concerned, responsible human being who constantly sought to apply his ideas to make the world a more human habitat for
all of us" (Deutsch, 1992, p. 41). The dialectic of his work and life was responsible in good part for his creativity that "enriched our understanding of individual and social life by his concepts and research" (Deutsch, 1992, p. 41). This is most clear for me in the heritage he left us in his action research program: the "study of a social problem, and efforts at its solution" (Bargal, Gold, & Lewin, 1992b, p. 81). Reading Bargal et al.'s (1992a) special issue in honor of Lewin, I was reminded of the action research program and of two contemporary areas of human activity that have been developing theory and practice to solve societal problems: scientists and academics who are participating in the struggles against racism and sexism. The body of theory and practice developed by people of color in the struggle against racism contributes richly to human knowledge (Burnham, in press; Davis, 1983; journals such as Black Scholar, Centro Boletin [Hunter College of the City University of New York]).

Another example of this type of activity is the Genes and Gender Collective, a group of women and men from many walks of life, of many racial and ethnic backgrounds, spanning the age range from undergraduate students to retired academics and professionals who have actively participated in those struggles. The Collective brings their academic knowledge to bear on their political experiences and activities by participating in scientific conferences and publishing the proceedings in the Genes and Gender series (Rosoff & Tobach, 1978-1994).

Feminist psychologists have been engaged in the battle against sexist theory and societal policy and practice, in their research and in their theory. In her book, Disruptive Voices (1992), Michelle Fine reviews the work of feminist researchers who have formulated programs that echo Lewin's action research as described by Bargal et al. (1992b, p. 8): "2) a continuous feedback of the research results to all parties involved, including clients; 3) cooperation between researchers, practitioners, and clients from the start and throughout the entire process; . . . 6) and using action research concurrently to solve a problem and to generate new knowledge." In qualitative activist research, Fine and Vanderslice draw on the work of Lewin to formulate scientific projects in which "the tasks of the researchers . . . [are] the facilitation and documentation of structural and social change processes" (1992, p. 199). Fine calls for "work with other communities in [the] struggle to bring about the unimaginable braiding of theorizing, studying, interpreting, and organizing for resistance" (1992, p. 231).

I was also reminded of the slogan that integrated the individual and society. When I first heard the slogan "personal is political," it rang a clarion note of validity for personal, political, and scientific activity. It epitomized the uniquely human process of conscious activity, an aspect of behavioral evolution I have been studying (Tobach, 1974, 1981, 1988, 1991b). It reflected a commitment that I and political co-workers have struggled to realize and understand. It reminded me of examples of the integration of the political and personal in the field
of research in which I had earned my living. Above all, it presented a way to formulate approaches to problems and to problem solving.

I wish to tell three narratives that exemplify the issues inherent in the slogan. Each of the narratives illustrates the interconnectedness of the personal (as exemplified in the intellectual, scientific, or academic labor of the individual) with the societal significance of that labor. The second and third narratives explicate the centrality of history—the need for vigilance to understand the implications of scientific work for societal policies and practices. It is the general applicability of the personal/political concept that brings the narratives together.

The three narratives are as follows:

1. Feminism in academia. It was feminist theory and practice that produced the slogan. The origins and contemporary status of the slogan are discussed.
2. Comparative psychology, ethology, and sociobiology. This narrative focuses on the use of science to support repressive policies. It also raises questions about the responsibility of scientists for human welfare.
3. The T. C. Schneirla narrative demonstrates the ever present danger of espousing unpopular theories in a repressive, or potentially repressive, atmosphere.

The Narrative of Feminism in Academia

I believe women have made three fundamental contributions to humanity’s struggle for equity, for justice, and against exploitation of people and the environment to satisfy someone’s greed for money and power: (1) the consciousness-raising process; (2) consensus as a requisite for action; and (3) above all, the conceptualization of personal is political.

When I first heard the slogan, personal is political, I understood it to be one of the best expressions of the integration of individual and social/societal processes. The political process, a unique characteristic of human behavior, could now gain strength and direction from the individual experiences of exploitation through discrimination, debasement, and derogation. As is true about most of our perceptions about important issues, this was a reflection of my own experiences and motivation.

The codification of behavior according to the form of the state is an old human pattern (Tobach, 1991a, 1991b). In the experience of many academic women in the United States, the science and art of government are derived from Aristotle (1962 edition of The Politics). He starts out in the first section of The Politics with the uplifting sentence “Our own observation tells us that every state is an association of persons formed with a view to some good purpose” (p. 25).
By the second section, however, we read of the household, which will be the natural base of the state and which will follow the patriarchal rule of Homer: "Each man has power of law over children and wives" (p. 27), the wives being necessary for reproduction. And by the fifth section, the argument is complete: "as between male and female the former is by nature superior and ruler, the latter inferior and subject" (p. 33).

The forms, the policies, and the practices of government typically reflect the biases of those who have the power to determine the politics. To envision that governments can be changed to reflect the personal experiences of those who have been without power is a radical idea. It indicates a relation of forces that is somehow different from the typical description based on forms of society (slave-owning, feudal, monarchical, republican), or of class relations, or of religion. Rather it speaks to some universal experience that underlies all the politics and all the states, that could apply not only to the condition of women but to the consciousness of all those who suffered from the genocidal practices of states against groups of people because of their race or ethnicity as well.

Some Meanings of the Two Terms in the Slogan

1. Personal. The dictionary definition of personal is on the private dimension (Nicholson, 1981): "of or peculiar to a certain person; private, individual" (Webster's New World Dictionary [WNWD], 1988). It is derived from mask; so, to be involved in a consciousness-raising experience is a way of removing the mask we all wear in order to protect ourselves. It may also come (Skeat, 1968) from persona, meaning to "sound through" as the speaker would in talking through the big mouth of the mask, producing a resonance. It is the one who speaks, the person.

The intimacy of the self, the uniqueness of each one's own experiences and body is a product of all the experiences of the individual, reflected through the internalization process (Tobach, in press-a). This internalization process is a synthesis of many levels of integration. Beginning with the physiological sensorimotor level, through the socialization cognitive/emotional level, through the societal level, at each level mediating/mediated objects (sensory input e.g., tactition, audition; words from others as well as actions and actual objects . . . clothing, tools and skills connected with them, food given and taken, etc.) function to internalize these external processes. The external material processes from those societal experiences are reflected in the images and signs in our heads.

At the same time, the expression of that internalization is the externalized, goal-directed activity dialectically produced by and producing the externalization/internalization process (Vygotsky, 1978). The significant outcome of internalization is the dialectic process of externalizing the experience: behavioral scientists study the personal/social/societal relationship; feminists need to
change it . . . to make the personal a motive to political, to make the political an instrument for changing the personal.

2. Political. The term political is derived from the Greek polis, city or state (Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology [ODEE], Onions, 1966). Its meaning as "characterized by policy, shrewd, judicious" was first used in the 15th century, as science and art of government in the 16th, and as political affairs or life, in the 17th. Today's first meaning (WNWD) is given as "of or concerned with government, the state or politics"; the third is "engaged in or taking sides in politics." In the same dictionary, the first meaning of politics is political science; the sixth is "factional scheming for power and status within a group." "Personal is political" may then be said to be directly concerned with scheming for taking sides in politics, for power, etc. Today the most "political" meaning of power, rather than that of engineering and other applications of science, is the one given as the fourth definition in WNWD (1988): "the ability to control others; authority; sway; influence." Here the schemes are for achieving the first meaning of power: "ability to do, act, or produce."

The term political is related to social and to societal in special ways. I would like to propose that we confine the term social to the interrelations of individuals to each other, e.g., the usual constellations of parents and children, of siblings, of lovers, of married people, of friends, neighbors, co-workers, colleagues, students and teachers, etc. These are the daily face-to-face intercommunicative formats by which people relate to each other as specific individuals. Social behavior is a characteristic of animals, as well as people (Tobach & Schneirla, 1968). However, "society" is a discontinuous level in the category of social behavior. The evolutionary process that produces societies requires the integration of levels from different behavioral categories such as language, rather than communication; use of tools, rather than utensils; and labor rather than work, etc. (Tobach, in press-a).

Society is a level of social behavior in which people come together to use language to decide how they shall live and relate to each other. No other animal does that. When people come together to form societies, the process that results is that of politics (Aristotle, 1962).

When we talk about personal and political, we mean the process in which people discuss how they shall live. It is a conscious process that has form and content that develops historically. Because it is about how people live it is being and acting "social" and "personal." Because we are human, the three levels of activity and consciousness, that is, the personal, social, and societal, are present at all times in each of us. Whether we are aware of this interconnection is another matter, the matter of consciousness-raising.

Humans have explicit and implicit ways of developing consciousness, a specific characteristic of humans because it involves language, and a socializa-
tion process that involves learning by example, and in which teaching takes place. The formats in which this takes place are as varied as human society: religious institutions, educational institutions, political institutions, labor institutions.

Attempts to Understand the Slogan

I soon became aware, in discussion with others and in reading, that my understanding of the "personal is political" phrase was not in agreement with its generally accepted meaning. It is a complex concept, as Sheila Rowbotham says: "It is still a vexed question as to when the personal is political or the personal remains personal, and how the personal connects with the political" (Rowbotham, 1983, p. 44). An authoritative description of the phrase is given by Maggie Humm (1990):

The personal is political. A phrase first coined by Carol Hanisch, and published in Notes from the Second Year (1970), which became the main slogan of second wave feminism. . . . Radical feminism used the slogan to argue that distinctions between the personal and the public realms are fallacious. Males dominate women in the public sphere in the same way they dominate women in the home. In addition, radical feminism argues that women's personal experience, revealed in consciousness-raising groups, could provide the inspiration and basis for a new politics. (p. 162)

A sociological formulation of the relation between personal and political is that of C. Wright Mills (1959). In his first chapter, "The Promise," he expresses the hope that sociology will offer the individual the tools to achieve an understanding of "the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world. They cannot cope with their personal troubles in such way as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them" (p. 4).

In her informative historical review and analysis of the significance of "personal is political" a little less than 10 years after the slogan emerged, Nicholson (1981) formulates personal as "private" and political as "public." She sees one of the critical meanings of the slogan as the recognition that a change had to take place in the personal relations between women and men as produced by their roles in the economic sphere of society if women were to be able to act effectively in the public or political sphere. The slogan "pointed to . . . the fact that interpersonal interactions could be assessed according to ideals of the public world (p. 91). Further, "If social norms and practices were what lay behind problems in the personal sphere, then removing such problems might require a social or political movement" (p. 92). " . . . to explain the modern situation of women we need to look at the current organization of society in which there are the dichotomized yet interdependent realms of private and public" (p. 95). "This split has had particularly negative consequences for women, as exemplified in women's exclusion from the public sphere . . ." (pp. 95–96). A resultant focus
on the home "developed out of a growing awareness of the obstacles presented by a woman's 'special role' within the home" that prevented her full activity in the public sphere. The slogan "brought to attention the . . . interdependencies of personal and public interaction and called into question the traditional dichotomization of spheres" (p. 96).

Although the interdependencies are recognized by Nicholson, the public and the political are not clearly demonstrated to be a significant factor in the personal relationship other than in terms of homemaking and reproduction. Many women, as she recognizes, work at the two jobs that society requires of them in order to survive. The experience of working and relating to others who are working, whether women or men, makes the essential characteristic of events outside the home both personal and "public," but primarily integrates the personal, the social (relations with co-workers), and the societal. The participation of the working woman in trade unions and other work-based groups (Evans, 1980) points to an aspect of the political that a dichotomization along the private and public dimension does not include. That aspect is the interdependencies that are derived from the societal (public) pervasiveness in all relations between the personal (private) and the social (private or public). Societal processes are political, and public; it is their influence in defining how people function in public and in private that is the critical dimension.

I also turned to the Women's Studies electronic mail network (WMST-L@UMDD.BitNet or WMST-L@UMDD.UMD.EDU) to learn what people thought about the slogan; there I read thirteen statements,¹ some of which follow:

Anything I say about myself that I would not ordinarily say in a professional setting is political. Something between introspection and a critical self-examination of practices with the aim of changing them, collectively.

When something happens to a person (e.g., a woman gets raped) it is a personal attack on this woman, but it is also a political attack on the woman . . . because of a society which is structured to make men predators and women victims.

It is a phrase which offers both analysis and method to my work.

A citation from C. Wright Mills (The Sociological Imagination) which was characterized by the memo writer as more passive than active, in which he said that personal troubles are reflective of societal patterns: if we have a 'sociological imagination' . . . an ability to see the connection between personal troubles and public issues, we can focus our attention on the public sphere when trying to solve problems.

I see personal is political as a moral obligation to do everything I can on a day to day basis to support my beliefs about what is right (e.g., going out of my way to support

¹I want to thank the people on the Women's Studies Network who responded to Arnold Kahn's question about "personal is political" and who permitted me to use their comments, or gave me information. They are Sandra Basgall, Elizabeth Bounds, Kimberly J. Cook, Diane Freedman, Betty J. Glass, Julia Grant, Karen Grant, Allan Hunter, Arnold Kahn, Kathy Killoran, Vicki Kirsch, Lynda G. Lippin, Mary McCullough, Patricia McRae, Carol Nicoll, Daphne Patal, Mary Kay Schleiter, Lynn Schlesinger, Frances Wasserlein, and Michele Wittig.
young feminist scholars, collaborating with a black faculty member on research, doing extensive recycling, etc.).

Any good novel [by and about women] is political.

In an introductory women's studies course, the students wore buttons proclaiming themselves lesbians, and recorded the responses of their peers. Those students who participated learned quickly the meaning of "personal is political."

It seems to me that . . . feminist pedagogy is the willingness of those of us who practice it to engage in the topics we offer our students for learning as participants, not as "observers" of a process. . . . Taking a chance on revealing ourselves often provides great rewards in the response of students, whose willingness to take their own risks sometimes increases. . . . Posting the message (on the network) is also part of making the personal political.

I do think there is a level in which the personal as political can be shared in a classroom, but I wonder if providing that kind of information in a classroom setting would endanger your position on the faculty. You can deal with the subject of spousal abuse from a third person perspective, without endangering your position.

For me the personal is the political is the literary critical, a topic I explore and a mode I adapt in my writing. For example, I discuss Adrienne Rich's personal/political comments on sexual harassment in the context of my own past experience of being harassed by several of my professors in my undergraduate years. I encourage students to make connections between their personal lives and academic knowledge. Thus I should be willing—at least to some extent—to model for students the ways in which those connections are made. In an introductory writing course, I asked students to share a journal entry which discusses their encounters with prejudice. This was a very powerful session, when I described my family's encounter with homophobia. Students have told me that they were inspired to work on their prejudice in this arena.

The above quotations represent a sample of the responses in nine days on the network. These, as well as the total sample, are not to be seen as a sufficient or properly gathered set of data from which to make reliable or valid inferences about the meaning of the slogan for women engaged in academic women's studies programs. Rather, these are to be seen as reflecting the point that Rowbotham made, and to reflect in part the statement that Humm made about Hanisch's writing. But these samples speak with a noteworthy similar voice. I see in these comments a use of consciousness-raising modified by good teaching methods. And as has been the experience with consciousness-raising groups, some of the participants do change their personal behavior.

Yet there is something missing in these discussions. Hanisch’s explication of the value of the consciousness-raising groups is that they are the beginning of decisions about actions to be taken. In the classroom situation in which the personal discussion is used by the teacher, the development of an activity or political action is not easily brought forward, and probably cannot be part of the teaching method because of the risks of losing a paying job.

Hanisch (1971) addresses the separation of political activity from the meaning of the personal experiences of the women that brought them to the movements for action. In discussing a particular political action, she says
When the action was proposed there was no question that we wanted to do it. I think it was because we saw how it related to our lives. We felt it was a good action. This has been my experience in groups that are accused of being “therapy” or “personal.” Perhaps certain groups may well be attempting to do therapy. Maybe the answer is not to put down the method of analyzing from personal experiences in favor of immediate action, but to figure out what can be done to make it work. It’s true we all need to learn how to better draw conclusions from the experiences and feelings we talk about and how to draw all kinds of connections.

As Hanisch addresses the concept, she is talking about how to improve the political activity of the women’s movement. She brings to bear the significance of activity in changing personal consciousness and the inherent significance of the personal in making that activity take place.

Women’s Studies Programs: Feminism in Academia

The experience with the network provoked some thought about women’s studies programs in general, and about my experiences in particular. Much of what I am saying about women’s studies programs has been said by others. Indeed, others said it better than I. I have only taught one undergraduate course in women’s studies in which I tried to do the things that I thought should be part of the women’s studies curriculum. I was not very successful but perhaps I might have become so with more experience. It did teach me something: to respect the people who initiate, develop, and teach such programs; it is a daunting and complicated pursuit. Congratulations and thank you! The one class I worked with also taught me that the people who come to those classes can teach us a lot. In the words of Carole Hanisch: listen to the people who are “apolitical.” There are good reasons for them to reject the agendas of feminist activists. And, I may add from my experience, they may reject the feminist philosophy of the courses.

Again, I repeat: the electronic mail network cannot be a sufficiently comprehensive source of information about women’s studies programs. There are necessary and reasonable restrictions of the nature of discussion of such issues on a public electronic network devoted to women’s studies as an academic discipline. The Women’s Studies List is coordinated by the exemplary Joan Korenman. Many of the ideas I discuss are already in operation in one form or another on the campuses. To document each idea, I would have to list many pages from the electronic archives relating to women and women’s studies coordinated by Paula Gaber. Doing so is not feasible within this article, but interested readers may obtain more information about these documents by contacting the archive’s coordinator (Gaber@inform.umd.edu) or may access the documents by using Telnet to connect to inform.umd.edu.

One of the respondents in the network wrote: “[what are] the teaching techniques for getting the point across that the personal is political?” I propose
that the personal cannot become political without activity. The answer to the question lies in finding a way to develop political activity among the students. Personal consciousness-raising, either in groups, therapeutic situations, or classrooms, is only part of the process. The pervasive process of women’s studies programs needs to be activity.

Activity is an integral part of consciousness, just as consciousness is an integral part of activity. Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of activity and cognitive development has been brought to a new level of significance in the women’s movement by the formulation of the personal/political slogan.

Socializing discussions are one form of activity; when activity produces something—a document, a meeting, a confrontation with administrators or government agencies that carry out sexist policies or practices—another important stage has developed. The production of tangible evidence of consciousness-raising is a powerful tool in the continuation of conscious activity to bring about change. It is a positive feedback phenomenon; or in the Activity Theory sense (Vygotsky, 1978), it is the consciousness/cognitive development produced by the mediating/mediated objects, in this case the words (signs) in the documents, and used at the meetings.

That this is not an easy task is reviewed by Sara Evans (1980) in her brief but illuminating discussion of attempts by the exploited to develop consciousness-raising techniques. She points out that these attempts have not been sufficiently frequent or systematically pursued to have led to any significant change in the way in which trade unions and radical political parties have functioned (pp. 218–219). The life of Rosa Luxemburg exemplifies the difficulties women have had in broad political movements when trying to develop this understanding of consciousness-raising and activity (Netti, 1966). She was one of the early proponents for the need for a systematic approach to the development of class consciousness leading to collective action” (Reynolds, 1990).

The problems in raising consciousness to action are highlighted by Hanisch (1971), who writes, “What I am trying to say is that there are things in the consciousness of ‘apolitical’ women (I find them very political) that are as valid as any political consciousness we think we have. We should figure out why many women don’t want to do action” (p. 157).

The same is true for the students who come to the women’s studies class and go away without having changed their lives too much. Because a women’s studies class is not a class in physics, biology, or geography, we should ask ourselves why. It is more like a well-taught physiology class that helps people understand their bodies and their functions better. Classes in the social sciences (anthropology, psychology, sociology) could have that effect but here the influence of the theoretical position of the teacher is so variable as to have more or less significance for the individual student.

Women's studies programs cannot exist without constantly being involved in struggles against racism, sexism, and homophobia on campus. The movement
has forced the establishment of instruments for such struggle: campus committees on equal opportunity, sexual harassment, etc. But these can only work when the vigil is constant, the response immediate, the response is by students, especially those in women’s studies, and it brings in natural allies from “outside” the campus—feminist men, people from civil rights movements for people of color, etc. The alliance with civil rights movements is also in need of constant attention and hard work on the parts of women who are not of color or of religious backgrounds that are discriminated against, e.g., Jews and Muslims. An example of the need to understand the special history of the different victims of one form of genocide or another is described by Kaplan (in press). “Outgroups” develop differently in different situations, pointing to a need for integration of this historical process in women’s studies programs.

Women’s studies programs can teach people how to integrate personal and political through activity. The forms of activity are many; struggle does not necessarily mean combat and fighting. It always means learning how to define reality, to formulate the problems and solve them as best as possible for the short and long run.

The contradictions of teaching women’s studies in the academic world are such that while the women are studying feminist theory and practice they are living in a world in which they are constantly being subjected to the sexist practices and theories of academia. Having taken the step of studying feminism, they are internalizing the very instruments that they are using . . . ideas, books, history. But this internalization necessarily involves critical thinking and changing the objects that are being internalized, and provides the tools and strength for combating sexism and racism.

It is noteworthy that in the developing computer network, the mediated/mediating object, the electronic message, changes consciousness of feminists in interesting ways. This makes for a continuous outbreak of calls for actions throughout the women’s studies network, a tool that needs careful monitoring and channeling on the part of the people who are maintaining the network. The needs for monitoring and channeling are the constraints of time, space, effort, and the capabilities of the senders and receivers to deal with every issue that requires action. Yet the dialectic has produced solutions to the constraint problem: one is the archival system that is the responsibility of Paula Gaber; another is the setting up of smaller networks for a particular activity. For example, outrage at the article by Katie Roiphe (1993) captioned “Rape Hype Betrays Feminism” published by the Sunday New York Times resulted in formation of an informal committee to demand redress of the grievance caused by the Times in publishing Roiphe’s article, and forced the Times to print a letter speaking to that point that they had originally rejected (Koss, 1993).

The usefulness of the electronic mail system as a tool is indicated in the discussion of networking by Evans (1980, p. 220). The special qualities of computer networking make for efficiency in many ways. Unfortunately, acces-
sibility to these networks is in the control of those who have power in academic life in general. Also, someone who is not on a campus or is without funds to buy the services of a network cannot participate. One tends to think of television, radio, and telephone as available to all in the USA; but this is not true, even though these have been available for many years. The future of computer networks may have the same configuration.

The second component of a women's studies programs is the consciousness-raising experience. This, of course, cannot be legislated by academic semester, but could be understood to be a "requirement" if you are a feminist on a campus.

A corollary of the consciousness-raising experience might be the examination of the relation between feminist theory and practice and the various disciplines that make up the typical school curriculum at all levels. The aim is for all of human knowledge to be non sexist and non racist. This demands a dialectical relationship between separatism and coalition. A true dialectic solution to these apparent contradictions would be a new interconnected and interdependent way of working and thinking that would lead to some new kind of relationship that we cannot conceive now. The beginning has been made, e.g., in primatology (Haraway, 1989) and in biology (Birke, 1986; Hubbard, 1993). Perhaps, along with the women's studies program, every department or discipline would set up women's studies in that field of knowledge. A collective of women's studies programs would develop, so that feminists would have access to that source of human knowledge and experience and affect the direction in which it grows and develops. The aim here is for a dialectical relationship between the general and the specific: the general being the field of knowledge, the specific being the struggle against racism and sexism in that field of knowledge.

Above all, the interpenetration of class and color in our society demands a knowledge and understanding of how these processes operate to express themselves in our consciousness and our activity. This is a valuable subject of women's studies programs. In our personal consciousness, there may be contradictions as regards our class: we may have been reared in a particular class with or without consciousness about the fact that we belonged to a particular class. In USA society, there is every effort to obfuscate class identity (e.g., calling people who work on hourly pay or salaries for someone else who owns the means of production "middle class," according to some vague relationship of income to class). The possibility of understanding class identity is much less in USA society that proclaims itself classless and democratic in contrast to many European nations in which the historic tradition of aristocracy is so entrenched that individuals are bred into an understanding of their class identity.

There are such groups in the USA also who, by virtue of their history, know that they are "upper class" and have expectations about their relations with people based on that identity. These characteristics of USA society are seen in women as well as in men; to deny this and to assume that someone identified as
to gender by society automatically becomes a member of some monolithic group is counterproductive to the agendas for equality of women.

It might be said that when people see a woman, they assume from the dress that the gender is woman; but the color is the first consideration of how that person is to be related to, and the class may become irrelevant in the light of the color of the woman. Depending on the context in which the woman is seen, and the person who is responding to the woman, these three processes (gender, color, and class) have different contradictory valences. In the USA the issue of color is predominant in most instances. The gender is more significantly related to than class, but any one of the three can become the dominant issue in a situation.

The Question Posed by This Narrative

If Hawkesworth (1987) is correct, and as it appears to me from the comments by people about the meaning of the slogan, she is, how did the slogan come to deemphasize the political and emphasize the personal?

Several processes may have been involved:

1. The severe effects of sexism on individuals’ mental and physiological state required some form of relief and the small group discussions were reasonable vehicles for seeking relief. This could be used without the consequences (payment, record of having sought help) of seeking professional help. Many women seek or are put in therapeutic positions whether they wish it or not. This happens, for instance, when women are in prison or when they are dealing with social agencies or private physicians. These are usually situations in which the personal problem is seen as the responsibility of the individual rather than the result of societal problems.

2. It was difficult to develop political programs that would unite women for effective action. The personal activity was in the end easier.

3. It was difficult to develop action programs (political) in the academic setting without endangering the futures of the students and the faculty.

Examination of the feasibility of developing a personal/political aspect to feminism in academia is needed.

The Narrative of Comparative Psychology, Ethology and Sociobiology

The terms in the title of this narrative are known to most psychologists. The relevant aspects of these disciplines in this discussion are the following. Comparative psychology is the study of the development and evolution of behavior based on eclectic practices and theories. Ethology is a discipline that was popularized in the scientific community and elsewhere by Konrad Lorenz. There have been
many subsequent variations on the theoretical writings of Lorenz. None of them, however, dispute Lorenz’s basic concept of the inheritance of behavior patterns as a means of showing the evolutionary relation among species, including humans (Lorenz, 1965). Sociobiology is a way of studying the evolution of social behavior that was forcefully brought into the scientific community by E. O. Wilson (1975). As in the case of ethology, there have been many subsequent theoretical reformulations, but again, as in the case of ethology, the primacy of genetic determinism is not disputed by the neosociobiologists.

Ethology

An example of the integration of theory and practice in the personal/political equation is seen in the life of Konrad Lorenz, the Nobel Laureate (Kalikow, 1983). As Klopfer’s new book (in preparation) and Lerner (1992) have reported, Lorenz’s ethological theory was of value to the Nazis. According to documents cited by Klopfer, “Bülow, the noted psychologist, in an effort to convince the Nazis that he was not an anti-Nazi, told of the Nazi party members he protected in his laboratory during the early thirties; among them was Konrad Lorenz, his student” (Klopfer, in preparation, p. 39). Further, Klopfer cites an article by Wieck (1990) that describes the probability that Lorenz had knowledge about the Nazi racial hygiene program for the elimination of the unfit (Klopfer, in preparation, p. 139). Another article by Deichmann (1992) “presents evidence indicating Lorenz actually took part in the psychological testing of racially ‘inferior’ persons as part of the Nazi ‘racial eugenics’ program.”

Lorenz himself never explicated a sense of responsibility for these periods in his life, or the significance of this aspect of his practice and its relation to his theory. In fact, as Klopfer writes, “After the war’s end, Lorenz emphatically disavowed any past commitment to the Nazi cause. His involvement, he claimed, was incidental to normal efforts to maintain himself in his profession. His military service was limited to that of a medical officer in a front-line unit (on the eastern front—where he was eventually captured, to finish the war at a Russian prisoner-of-war camp)” (Klopfer, in preparation, pp. 37–38).

The scientists of the former USSR view Lorenz’s war imprisonment and Nazi history (Sokolov & Baskin, 1991, 1993) in the way most scientists in the USA and Europe view these aspects of Lorenz’s life (Lerner, 1992).

Sociobiology

The dominance of sociobiological theory in contemporary human behavioral science was established with the appearance of the encyclopedic book by Wilson in 1975. The criticisms of sociobiology as a theory of the evolution of social behavior of all species, including humans, became part of the literature
(Barlow & Silverberg, 1980; Kaplan, 1978; Lewontin, Rose, & Kamin, 1984). The criticisms have not been persuasive; sociobiology is accepted and defined by WNWD as “the scientific study of the biological basis for animal and human social behavior.” The definition continues: “It is based on the theory that some or much of such behavior is genetically determined.” This arbiter of the contemporary meaning of words calls it the scientific study, not a scientific study. In the case of Wilson as well there is no published indication that he has separated himself in any way from those who use the theory of sociobiology to promulgate racist and sexist theories.

An example of the racist application of sociobiology is the writing of J. P. Rushton (1988, 1990). Rushton’s application of sociobiology and r and K selection theory (Wilson, 1975) to the differences among Asians, Europeans, and Africans ranks them in descending order of economic and academic achievement, socially acceptable behavior, and intelligence, and ranks them in reverse sequence, in respect to size of genitalia and sexual activity. The basic concept of genetic determinism has become widely accepted (Sunday & Tobach, 1985; Tobach & Rosoff, in press).

Another application of sociobiological theory to Judaism and anti-Semitism is being prepared for publication by Kevin MacDonald. In a communication to Richard M. Lerner, MacDonald describes a book he is writing to be entitled Separation and Its Discontents: Judaism as an Evolutionary Group Strategy; Towards an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism. In this book, MacDonald (in preparation) postulates that “. . . Judaism must be understood fundamentally as exhibiting universal human tendencies for self-interest, ethnocentrism, and competition for resources and reproductive success” (p. 2). Further, “. . . Judaism . . . as a group strategy characterized predominantly by cultural and genetic segregation from gentile societies combined with resource competition with the gentile society. This cultural and genetic separatism combined with resource competition then tends to result in division and hatred within the society” (p. 3, that is, antisemitism). And as a proposal for remediation of anti-semitism: “complete cultural and genetic assimilation by Jews would end anti-Semitism, and that the only barriers to complete assimilation have been and still are erected by Jews themselves” (p. 64).

Peter Steinfels, in a column entitled “Beliefs” in the New York Times on August 7, 1993, reported on a discussion taking place among Jewish theologians and other leaders about the definition of “who is Jewish?” The problem arises because there has been a history of marriage by Jewish men to non-Jewish women, beginning with Moses; a history of rape in which Jewish women bore children of non-Jewish men and other traditional experiences of women in patriarchal societies. In light of this discussion, it would seem that MacDonald will need to find another “evolutionary strategy” besides “genetic desegregation” to combat antisemitism.
This narrative presents two aspects of the relation between the individual's personal theory and research work and the sociopolitical process of that theory and research. The first is true of all work: Does the individual scientist have a responsibility to society? The second is specific to behavioral science: Can a behavioral theory be inherently without significance for societal processes (political), and thus, for the personal?

In the case of other sciences, the societal responsibility of scientists is clear as the global environmental protection movement has developed. In the case of behavioral science, whether based in biology or psychology, it may not be as clear, but it is impossible for that theory and research to be without societal implications. The integration of the personal and political cannot be separated.

**The Schneirla Narrative**

I am not aware that Kurt Lewin and T. C. Schneirla knew each other. I know that Schneirla read Lewin because Lewin's writings were assigned in Schneirla's course on thinking at New York University. I also believe that in the warm friendship between Muzafer Sherif and Schneirla there had to be some discussion about Lewin. I see some similarities in the world outlooks of Lewin and Schneirla, and in some aspects of how they worked as psychologists. One difference between the two men and how they integrated their world outlook with their scientific research was that for Lewin the relation between his theory and his practice as a social psychologist was direct. For Schneirla the relation was less direct. Schneirla was a comparative psychologist, that is, a student of the development and evolution of behavior (Aronson, Tobach, Rosenblatt, & Lehrman, 1972). Traditionally, that discipline did not study human behavior or psychology, although the theory of behavioral development and evolution related to all species, including humans. Yet Schneirla was aware and interested in human political behavior.

This narrative must integrate three pieces of information that may be unfamiliar to you. These are (1) the political history of anticommunism in the USA and the meaning of the term "red-baiting," (2) the concept of integrative levels, and (3) contemporary red-baiting. With these pieces of information, the question raised by my narrative may seem more reasonable. I must, therefore, make some digressions before I tell the narrative and pose the question. The narrative about comparative psychology, ethology, and sociobiology has already given you some necessary information towards that end.

**A Brief Statement about the History of Anticommunism**

It is difficult for me to accept that many of the people I know today do not necessarily know the same history I know. Of course, I have the opportunity to
know what they know, but they have not necessarily been given the opportunity to know what I know. The study of history, even relatively recent history of the last 50 years of the country in which we live, has declined in the school systems from grade school through graduate school. And so, I will have to set forth some of the facts of life during the period in which Lewin, Schneirla, and I lived.

Today, when the Soviet Union has ceased to exist, and the cold war has supposedly ended, it is hard to understand that period in USA history. The USA had a long history of fighting communism, or the red menace (Dubofsky & Theoharis, 1983; Kutler, 1982; Theoharis, 1971, 1979; Wittner, 1974), notably starting with the establishment of the USSR. The fears that communism would spread throughout the world were fanned by government agencies, the press, academia, the church, and other societal institutions. Legislative committees were established on all governmental levels—city, state, and federal—to “investigate” and expose the insurgency activities of alleged communists. Despite the alliance of the USA and USSR during the war against German Nazism, the “cold war doctrine” formulated by Truman and Churchill at the end of the war once more promoted the fear of the threat of the communist menace to the rest of the world. Once again, committees of the kind described above were activated or newly constituted.

One of the most notorious committees was the House Un-American Activities Committee. This committee was responsible, among other censorship activities, for the Hollywood blacklist, that is, the listing of suspected communists who were then prevented from earning a livelihood in the film industry. This committee is best known for its activities during the McCarthy era, which ended with the famous hearings in which the military establishment exposed the anti-Americanism of McCarthy.

The relevant period of the anticommunist investigations for this narrative was between the years 1939 and 1953. During the heyday of the anticommunist activities by the government, the terms witch-hunt and red-baiting were part of the common language. The agencies encouraged people to report each other, to engage in a witch-hunt. If people spoke up critically of the status quo, they were called communists, that is, they were “red-baited.” Being called a communist was frequently enough to halt any criticism of those with political or economic power. People spied on each other, informed on each other to the committees, kept copies of leaflets and letters, attended meetings of people they did not agree with for the purpose of reporting who was there and said what—all in the name of protecting the USA from the enemy. The targets of these investigations were peace organizations, women’s organizations, civil rights organizations, and trade unions. The anticommunist committee in New York State was particularly interested in high schools and universities. Many academics lost their jobs during that time, or were not hired because they did not survive the “security” check.

Although Schneirla did not personally experience fascism, he took it seri-
ously and engaged in activities that might have labeled him a "premature antifascist" as he supported the Spanish Loyalists in their defense against Franco, who was supported by Germany and Italy. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Schneirla was opposed to atomic warfare, and supported movements for world peace. Along with other psychologists, he protested the persecution of people for their political beliefs during the early days of the cold war.

His interests in antifascism, peace, and political freedom would seem not to stem from his work as a comparative psychologist, but in fact, they were a political expression of his personal philosophy. He was a populist, and a materialist. His societal concerns reflected his populist philosophy.

His materialism was expressed in a strong antivitalism in biology and psychology. Thus, he was critical of the concepts of instinct and preformationism, as they related to behavior and biological processes. It was this philosophical base that led him to an interest in, and a sufficient appreciation of, the concept of integrative levels to make it a fundamental part of his own theoretical approach to the study of the development and evolution of behavior (Novikoff, 1945a, 1945b). Schneirla's international reputation for the study of ants was based on his careful investigation of behavioral patterns once thought to be instinctive, such as the active (raiding) and statary (supposedly dormant) phases of the army ant's life cycle. He showed that these cyclical patterns were the result of the integration of physiological and behavioral levels (Aronson et al., 1972).

Schneirla, who had already applied this principle in his writings and research, published explicitly on the concept of integrative levels and social behavior as it discriminated between humans and other animals and demonstrated the discontinuity of the evolution of social behavior with the appearance of the human species (Aronson et al., 1972). These papers by Schneirla played a significant role in the work of his students and many others. Further, Schneirla's application of the concept of levels to the problems posed by theories of instinctive behavior, such as ethology, led to his solution of the seemingly insoluble nature/nurture, heredity/environment dichotomy. He showed that the solution of that dilemma was the study of behavioral and other development using the concept of integrative levels.

The Concept of Integrative Levels

The concept of integrative levels has a history (Aronson, 1984; Tobach, in press-a, in press-b) and many interpretations, but to be true to the historical time frame of this narrative, I offer an abbreviated version of the statement by Novikoff in 1945.

The concept of integrative levels of organization is a general description of the evolution of matter through successive and higher orders of complexity and integration. It views the development of matter, from the cosmological changes resulting in the formation of the earth to the social changes in society, as continuous . . . and as discontinuous because it
passes through a series of different levels of organization—physical, chemical, biological and sociological. . . Each level of organization possesses unique properties of structure and behavior . . . the unique properties . . . cannot be predicted . . . from the laws of the lower level. . . Laws of a lower level [e.g., biological laws] are inadequate to describe a higher level [e.g., sociological laws]. The laws unique to the higher level can be discovered by approaches appropriate to the particular level; to do otherwise is invalid scientifically, and in some instances, dangerous socially. (pp. 209, 214–215)

It is clear that subscribing to this concept, Schneirla would be opposed to the biologizing of human societal processes (Aronson et al., 1972). It is understandable, also, that he would be critical of ethology.

Contemporary Red-Baiting

A recent book by a historian of biological science (Mitman, 1992) analyzes the relation between the personal social philosophy and the theoretical writings of scientists studying the evolution of social organization. He discusses the issue of biologizing human social behavior particularly as it was explicated at a conference held on the relation of the biological and social sciences, under the title of “Levels of Integration” (Redfield, 1941). The concept of integrative levels is clearly a central focus. In reading Mitman’s book, I came across these startling statements (Mitman, p. 166):

Alex Novikoff, a biologist at Brooklyn College from 1931 to 1945, later fired from the University of Vermont for his affiliations with the American Communist Party, challenged their analogical reasoning. [“Their” refers to Albert E. Emerson, the noted entomologist, and Ralph W. Gerard, the famous neurobiologist.] . . . In his article, “The Concept of Integrative Levels and Biology,” published in Science in March of 1945, Novikoff criticized . . . particularly the papers of Emerson and Gerard. From a Marxist perspective, the biological and sociological constitute two distinct dialectical levels. Novikoff objected to Emerson’s and Gerard’s analyses because they violated this distinction by emphasizing the continuity between biological and social evolution. . . . For Novikoff, human society constituted a distinct social level separate from the biological level of animal societies and required its own independent analysis. . . . T. C. Schneirla, a comparative psychologist at New York University and member of the Psychologists’ League who supported numerous communist causes throughout the 1930s and 1940s reiterated Novikoff’s point in his criticism of Emerson and Gerard’s deployment of the superorganism concept. (Note 57)

Beyond a brief statement of what Novikoff wrote about the concept of integrative levels, and how it differed from that of Emerson and Gerard, Mitman presents no critical analysis of the relation between Novikoff’s alleged political views and his disagreements with Emerson or Gerard. Neither Schneirla’s views on levels, his opinion of Emerson and Gerard, nor the relation of Schneirla’s theoretical position to his support of “numerous communist causes” are presented at all.

Schneirla’s philosophical beliefs did not include dialectical and historical materialism (sometimes called Marxism; communist ideology). When I once wrote him that one of his theoretical formulations seemed an application of dialectical materialism, he wrote “No!” across the top of the page.
My reaction to the red-baiting is a function of having been a politically sentient person during the late 1930s and later when the accusation of having "communist" or "red" ideas meant loss of jobs and social acceptance in most of USA society. I also have criticized the biologizing of human societal processes (Tobach, 1974, 1988, 1991a, 1991b).

Novikoff was accused of being a communist while he was still teaching at Brooklyn College; he left voluntarily and obtained a position at the University of Vermont. The same allegations were lodged with the university administration, who promptly fired Dr. Novikoff. Subsequently, a committee of the National Education Association found this university along with others guilty of having abrogated the civil rights of people fired because of such allegations and failure to cooperate with the committees doing the investigations. Although it was never "proved" that Novikoff was affiliated with the Communist Party, the issue of "proof" is not relevant to the vitiation of his rights to an academic position.

What was Novikoff's "Marxist perspective?" Nowhere in the articles written by Novikoff in Science (1945a, 1945b) does he cite Marx. He does cite an article by Joseph Needham, which appeared in a book by Prenant (a French Marxist biologist) entitled Biology and Marxism. Mitman does not give the source for his statement about his attribution of a Marxist perspective to Novikoff.

What did Note 57 say? After giving some references to biographical information about T. C. Schneirla, several reports by the House Committee on Un-American Activities are cited (House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1947–1957). Although one citation was missing from the New York Public Library and could not be checked, an examination of the available items reveals that Schneirla was not personally called before the committee or individually cited. The nature of the "communist causes" followed by Schneirla were described in various documents:

1. Reprint of an article that appeared in the Daily Worker, a communist newspaper. The Civil Rights Congress of New York called for a conference to take place on June 25, 1949 on the unconstitutional jailing of communists, sponsored by (among others; I only use the names of people I recognize) Henry Pratt Fairchild, Philip Morrison, Margaret Schlauch, and T. C. Schneirla. A statement signed by 450 leading figures in America urging the president and Congress to uphold the constitutional rights of the Communist Party of the United States; signed by (among others) Franz Boas; Jacques Bronfenbrenner of St. Louis, Missouri; Aaron Copland; Henry Pratt Fairchild; Ralph Gundlach (a comparative psychologist in Seattle, Washington, who lost his job subsequently for his "political" views); Ernest R. Hilgard; Otto Klineberg; Max Lerner; C. H. Mowrer; T. C. Schneirla; Harry F. Ward; and Goodwin Watson.


Schneirla’s antivitalist and material approach to the study of comparative psychology was also the basis of his criticism of ethology, but not of Konrad Lorenz as a person. Although he was aware of it, he never commented in print on Lorenz’s Nazi history (Lerner, 1992). Given his early antifascist history, I wonder about this. It raises a question as to why Schneirla did not write on Lorenz’s Nazi past.

There are many possible reasons for this. One of the usual explanations is that as one gets older one gets more conservative. Perhaps he liked Lorenz personally and did not wish to criticize him publicly. Perhaps he thought it was not relevant. There is no basis for any of these conjectures being either true or false, insofar as any of the extant documents relating to his life would attest. However, on the basis of the personal discussions he had with colleagues who worked with him for many years, none of these appear to be true.

We also have no evidence that Schneirla was visited by the FBI, as were many who were named before the House Un-American Activities Committee. We do know, however, that much of this research support came from the Office of Naval Research (ONR). We have no evidence that he was approached by the ONR about the allegations made about him to the House Un-American Activities Committee. We also do not know if he responded to the general, widespread chilling of free expression of opinion. We do know that when his student Daniel S. Lehrman wrote his famous paper in 1953 criticizing ethology, Lehrman was advised by leaders in the field not to emphasize Lorenz’s Nazi history. With great reluctance, and after much discussion with Schneirla, Schneirla advised Lehrman to follow their advice. How these incidents affected Schneirla’s decision not to address the issue of Lorenz’s history in print remains to be explored.

The policies and atmosphere that were abroad during the cold war lead to harassment, red-baiting and more. And now at the end of the cold war, we again find this trivialization of a scientist’s work and theory in the context of red-baiting.
What is the point to this narrative? The harsh truth is that unpopular opinions that challenge the status quo or the views of those in power in any institution will always make the holder of those opinions a target for suppression, repression, or oppression. At the same time, the substance of the contrary opinions are ignored. In urging political activity based on personally developed conscious commitment, I cannot overlook the dangers. For this we owe a special debt to those who go ahead despite such threats.

In this narrative, I believe I have shown that Schneirla’s antiethological views, his antivitalist, and populist philosophy demonstrate the integration of personal and political.

Parting Thoughts

In these three narratives, I have seen the value of the powerful concepts of the integrity or unity of the individual and social/societal processes, of the integrity or unity of theory and practice, and of how these two unifying integrations produce human consciousness. The way pointed by Lewin is not an easy one to follow. It is, however, one most likely to be necessary for the survival of the planet and humanity.

References


