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The Social and Historical Context of Stress

No concept in the modern psychological, sociological, or psychiatric literature is more extensively studied than stress. The sheer amount of scientific literature is so extensive that it is no longer possible to conduct a comprehensive review. But the amount of research is only one facet of the attention given to stress. I submit that stress is also the social-psychological concept of greatest interest to Western society. Perhaps no other psychosocial topic is discussed more often in the lay press or kaffeeklatsches. We are consumed with the stress concept and we use it as a basic explanatory mechanism to describe the underpinnings of what we see as wrong with work, family life, and our society. Violence, marital discord, disease, mental illness, failed productivity, and juvenile delinquency are all depicted within a model that places stress as a central causative element.

Can we really have identified the basic ingredient of our social and psychological ills in one fell swoop? Have twentieth-century psychology and sociology been so successful that now our only task is to disentangle the mystery of stress? Have we isolated the basic building block of people's malaise, malady, and mania, or have we found a "whipping boy" so that our noble fears have a scapegoat to draw attention from them? This chapter attempts to delve into the philosophy of the psychosocial study of stress so that we can have a deeper and more inclusive sense of the substance of our inquiry. By understanding the historical, religious, and philosophical roots of stress, I hope to lead us to a clearer view of the science of stress research—

where the study of stress has gone, and possible directions for its future examination.

Stress is hardly a new term. It has been used in medicine for centuries (Hinkle, 1977). Robert Burton, in 1624, wrote of the sources of disease and melancholy (depression) in particular, emphasizing social stress as one of the greatest causes of malady.

De-arths, tempests, plagues, our astrologers foretell us; Earthquakes, inundations, ruins of houses, consuming fires, come little by little, or make some noise beforehand; but the knaveries, impostures, injuries and villainies of men no art can avoid. We can keep our professed enemies from our cities, by gates, walls and towers, defend ourselves from thieves and robbers by watchfulness and weapons; but this malice of men, and their pernicious endeavours, no caution can divert, no vigilancy foresee, we have so many secret plots and devices to mischief one another. (p. 84)

The essence of what we mean by stress is found in an ancient form in one of the most poignant stories of the Bible. The Book of Job is the tale of a man of enormous wealth and righteous character. Satan challenged this righteousness, claiming it was based on Job's good fortune, and not his faith. So God was forced to test Job by taking all he prized.

There came a messenger onto Job, and said "the oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; and the Sabeans made a raid, and took them away.... A fire ... hath burned up all thy sheep and the servants.... The Chaldeans set themselves ... and fell upon thy camels, and have taken them away.... Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their elder brother's house; and, behold, there came a great wind ... and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead."

When this did not break Job's faith,

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot even unto his crown. [And Job was so utterly transformed that his three best friends] knew him not. (Job 1:13-2:13)

The list of Job's losses could have been transcribed directly from the Hebrew to create the stressful life event lists used in stress research today. It was Job's faith, his sense of the meaning of his place before his God, that saw him through his travails until all he had was restored twofold.

It would seem that our attraction to Job's saga is our identification with the basic message. We live a life in which troubles are inevitable. We know that as Job knew ... *But man is born unto trouble, as [certainly as] the sparks fly upward* (Job 5:7). The question becomes what influence will our stress have, knowing that it will be set in our path in one form or another. How will we cope? Who will comfort us? How will we be transformed? On what internal resources will we be able to call and how successfully?

STRESS AND OUR VIEW OF OUR WORLD

Returning to modern times, we find ourselves in an historical period which social commentators often depict as the Age of Anxiety or the Age of Stress (see Wilson, Galvin, & Thompson, 1983). What does this mean to be in the Age of something? In this first chapter, I hope to explore this first question. Because scientists have produced so much work on stress, we are risking losing the forest for the trees. We are not clear on the question of in which forest we wander. We must take some time to step outside the research on stress, to see its context. From outside the forest, we see its shape, its height, and its boundaries. From inside, we learn stress's rules and laws, but in a way that is decontextualized and disconnected if we do not step outside from time to time and question the very path we have taken. Perhaps by seeing both what is meant by the term *Age* and by capturing the historical *Age* that preceded the Age of Stress, we can begin to understand the stress paradigm better. In so doing, I hope to gain greater objectivity for this book and to lay the groundwork for a critical analysis of the subjective biases that stress researchers and theorists have made and that I will inevitably make as well.

I will argue that because stress is so central to broad social concerns outside of the behavioral sciences, stress more than other areas of inquiry has been conceptualized, shaped, and reshaped in a way that fits a certain worldview. How we see stress is not a pure outgrowth of the scientific methods of the behavioral sciences, but a combination of science and societal pressures. The concept of stress is also historically grounded, and this fairly recent history gave birth to a way of demarcating the borders of stress. Stress, as we study it, was developed out of the age of two great wars, and a long Cold War that threatened first the domination of the world and then our species' very existence on earth.

Stress also is necessarily conceptualized in a way to fit in with the current *zeitgeist* in the study of psychology, sociology, and psychiatry. Being a mainstream area of study, stress not only influences psychological thought, but also it is shaped by psychological thought. In the psychoanalytic era, if studied at all, stress would be seen through a psychoanalytic prism. Although it may have set the stage for our current conceptualizations, Freud's concept of anxiety has little overlap with how we envision the much broader and comprehensive term *stress*.

At the current turn of the wheel, and this wheel certainly continues to spin, we are in the midst of the cognitive revolution in psychology. Not surprisingly, stress is therefore mainly understood in cognitive terms. Even here, however, we see that sociology and psychiatry part with psychology. Unless psychology is wholly correct and these sister disciplines are wholly

wrong, which no one in any of these fields believes, then we necessarily have only part of the picture of the stress phenomena if we do not consider these other viewpoints.

For the clinician in psychology and medicine, for the human resources professional in industry, and for educators in the classroom, stress is a foundation concept as well. By taking a step back and examining stress in its wider context, I hope to foster thoughts and questions for practice. When addressing stress in one way, we serve certain ends. By altering our vantage point, we alter the questions we ask, the way we intercede, the conclusions we make, and the meanings we impart. If stress is in the mind, we change people's thoughts. If stress is in the environment, we alter people's world, not their beliefs about the world. If stress is psychodynamic, we dig deeper and intervene earlier. If stress is endemic to life, we may even choose to leave it be and move on to more manageable pastures.

STRESS AND THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC PARADIGMS

If we can be humble enough to admit that the behavioral sciences are inexact, then we must follow the lead of Popper (1959) and Kuhn (1962), and pay attention to the parameters of the paradigm in which we study, analyze, and intervene on stress. Indeed, much of what and how we study in the social and behavioral sciences is largely a matter of interpretation of scant data that is always acknowledged in our scientific journals as ambiguous enough to be open to multiple interpretations. This ambiguity demands that we rely heavily on theory, and our theories are constructed within the boundaries of larger paradigms. As Kuhn and Popper write, a paradigm is not a truth. Rather, it is a way of construing scientific outcomes, as Kuhn states, we are enmeshed in a web of meaning that is the product of "the theory ladenness of facts."

When we viewed earth as the center of the universe for religious reasons, facts were scientifically interpreted to fit this paradigm. Provable mathematical theorems and logical arguments were created and quoted to support this thesis, and it is a mistake to think that this was a matter of distinguished scientists arguing empirically with superstitious clerics. There were eminent scientists on both sides of the issue. Indeed, to understand the spinning of earths and the movements of galaxies in modern scientific terms, we must resort to another unknowable—the paradigm of the infinity of the universe. Because without infinity, where does this ultimate motion transport us?

We interpret facts within the theories that are dominant. Our theories, in turn, exist within larger paradigms that often cross disciplines and define

the borders of our ways of knowing. Moreover, we create facts within the ruling paradigm, and means of uncovering knowledge outside of the paradigm are deemed unscientific. Hence, it is not just that our study outcomes are interpreted in the light and shadows of a paradigm; the very methods we use are governed by the paradigm and are biased to support the paradigm.

When Anna Freud (1958) defined adolescence as a period of "storm and strife," she created a paradigm, with a small *p* according to Kuhn's model. Studies that followed were devised in a way that accepted this assumption *a priori*, and set out to define and understand the nature of this stormy period. But this existed within another, larger Paradigm (Kuhn's large *P*) that defined how the very issue of psyche was conceptualized and could be studied. The larger *P* in paradigm can be seen in Sigmund Freud's work. For S. Freud, logical positivism and its accompanying fixation on scientific measurement were irrelevant to the study of the human psyche. Hence, when sent an empirical study confirming the existence and operation of defense mechanisms, he replied on a postcard, "Gantze Amerikanische, very American." The scientific method was inconsistent with the psychoanalytic method, and Freud was unconcerned that psychoanalysis was not a science of prediction. The boundaries of his paradigm served as explanation and understanding without resort to logical positivism. The paradigm Freud embraced colored the questions he asked and the data he accepted.

It is also worthwhile to point out that a paradigm may follow a set of methods as much as they might a theoretical perspective. The study of stress in psychology became nested in the questionnaire method based on the pioneering work of Janet Taylor Spence (1985) and C. D. Spielberger (1966, 1972). Spence and Spielberger developed reliable and valid questionnaires that allowed for the measurement of the internal state of anxiety. This had advantages over the psychoanalytic method, because it opened the way for the quantification of stress responses. Spielberger further aided scientific inquiry by clarifying the state versus trait distinction. He distinguished between anxiety state, being the emotional expression of anxiety during a given period of time, and anxiety trait, being the general tendency to become anxious that characterized the individual's personality. However, by developing paper-and-pencil measures of internal states, Spence and Spielberger may have also steered psychology in the direction of seeing stress as an internal rather than external aspect of the environment.

THE CONCEPT OF AGE

To better understand how the stress paradigm developed, I would like to spend some time on inquiry as to what we mean by the Age of Stress, and

the cultural context which shapes and is shaped by this Age. The term *Age* comes from references to defining elements of a time of human culture. The Stone Age, Iron Age, and Age of Reason are historical periods wherein the conceptual center is that thing. It is the hub of the wheel upon which society spins. From the stone comes flint for fire, arrow, and spearheads to hunt more effectively, and the sculpting of idols to worship. Knowledge of stone becomes power. The group near the best quarries is more powerful than its neighbor, the person who can shape the stone is more powerful than those who cannot, and stone itself becomes in some way sacred. Men govern stone, and women are not permitted to shape stone. Thus it is not only that this was the period in which stone was in use, but also the period in which civilization was in large part defined by stone. Nor should we misinterpret that stone was all-defining. Tribal life, knowledge of nature, and the process of adaptation were all developing both in relation to stone and independent of it.

More abstractly, more modernly, and more connected to our own Age of Stress, we have the Age of Reason. Beginning in the 1600s and lasting until the end of the eighteenth century, Locke, Rousseau, and Descartes developed a philosophy esteeming reason as its core. The Age of Reason credited the scientific method for the advances of society and science. It saw itself as a modern, informed response to the Middle Ages, which were dominated by superstition, ignorance, and blind acceptance of authority. It was a fountainhead for scientific discovery and, at the same time, the wellspring of democracy. If humans could reason, they could advance their lot and rule themselves. Borrowing from the sciences, it saw mathematics as the basic truth and logic as the revealer of self-evident laws of nature. From the Age of Reason came not only advancement of science, but also science as power. Philosophers such as Locke and Voltaire also influenced the framework, form, and arguments that led to the American and French Revolutions. At the same time, men, especially white Northern Europeans were seen as the guardians of reason, and women and other peoples were seen as emotional and irrational (Montesquieu, 1752). These conclusions, too, were seen as empirical, logical truths.

Why, then, are we no longer considered to be in the Age of Reason? Are we not reasoning individuals, and are the sciences and society not based on the notion that reason is paramount to progress? Reason began to be criticized in the early parts of the last century for often being arbitrary. What was argued to be reason and logic was frequently tautology. Reason was also pushed aside to make room for the ideas of spontaneity, emotions, and the rise of individuality, all of which were based not on reason and its necessary call for order, but on passion. And so we have entrée to the Romantic Movement. Consistent with this change, Marx argued that the Age of Reason

son was not based on logic, but on the promotion of a certain class. Landed people used reason as a convenient tool to promote their class and remove them from the yoke of higher authority. He argued that mathematics did not enter into the formula of human welfare. Freud also dismissed the idea that reason governed action. By seeing unconscious processes as underpinning human behavior, Freud rejected the notion that humans were logical and that reason ruled. An ultimate romantic, for Freud, passion ruled. So total was Freud's rejection of logical order that passion not only ruled, it had us so emotionally dominated that we sexually desired our mothers and plotted to kill our fathers.

It is thus apparent that the theme of an Age, the paradigm, shapes the substance of what we believe and value. The paradigm silently demarcates how scientists inquire, how people think, how facts are interpreted, and even what we believe to be facts. We can also see that one Age gives way to another. In some ways these Ages are linked, but according to Foucault (1970), we should also pay heed to their disconnectness, and not their smooth transition.

To examine both the transition to our current age and its distinctiveness, we need then ask what preceded the Age of Stress? It is interesting that it would probably be considered the Atomic Age, if we can be allowed to call the Age of Anxiety and the Age of Stress a basic renaming of the same period. The atomic bomb ended World War II and brought a new reality to the world. Access to the bomb was access to ultimate power and possible world destruction; many said probable world destruction. Post-World War II life was consumed with the idea of the power of the bomb and how we would, or would not, save ourselves from it. People unearthed their backyards to build air-raid shelters and schools practiced air-raid drills. I cannot remember if it was weekly or monthly, but in this Atomic Age I recall a childhood of crouching under our desks or next to our lockers in order to practice the moment that we would save ourselves from the atomic blast. With the Cold War between America and Russia very much a reality, the folly was not so much our fearing The Bomb as it was expecting that we might survive it. The papers, politics, film, and art reflected our fears and thoughts. Our economy was drained to build up our atomic and strategic arsenal, and meet our need to defend ourselves against this omnipresent threat.

Another possible connection that we can surmise between the Atomic Age and the Age of Stress is the creation of a time of anxiety. The reality of the atomic bomb produced a mushroom of fear that placed a pallor over our lives. Although World War II ended with reason winning over tyranny and evil, anxiety emerged in the postatomic dust. Anxiety comes from our fear of loss, separation, and harm, and the Atomic Age found us in the midst

of these fears. Socially, the Atomic Age both pressed technology forward and produced the ugly era of McCarthyism, in which the U.S. Congress investigated suspected communists and the very implication of suspicion was grounds for blacklisting, dismissal, and often imprisonment. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed as spies in 1953 for giving atomic bomb secrets to the Soviet Union, against worldwide calls for clemency by such leaders as Einstein and Pope Pius XII. Anxiety was the order of the day.

The Atomic Age also saw a reemergence in the belief that science would answer our needs. Science had produced the bomb that created the nihilism and protest of the Beat Era of Ginsberg and Kerouac, with its black garb and emphasis on a return to individuality. But for most, there also existed the belief that science would bring medical advances, safety, security, leisure, and prosperity. Science would liberate us from disease and poverty and bring the 32 hour work week. Our only problem was how to spend our excess leisure time! Modern psychology was to be a part of this modern scientific revolution. And psychology clearly aligned itself with the sciences and emulated physics as its method. Moving from a realm akin to philosophy, psychology adopted the traditions of Wundt and Titchener, whose laboratories operated under the scientific method. Measurement became meaning, and statistics became the tool that replaced logical reasoning as the method of inquiry. This is not to say that statistics are inherently illogical, but where logic and statistics were in disagreement over any point, statistics determined conclusions. So, when one system of reason, psychology, was seen as either inconsistent with statistical conclusions or not given to principles of scientific measurement, it was rejected by mainstream psychology, which sought explanations of behavior that could be measured, statistically analyzed, and empirically judged.

THE AGE OF STRESS AS A PARADIGM

This brings us to analyze the distinctiveness of the Age of Stress. The cover story of *Time Magazine* of June 6, 1983 declared us in the Age of Stress. It depicted us as a society consumed by demands for our resources and threats to our well being. McGrath (1970) defined stress as a "substantial imbalance between environmental demand and the response capability of the focal organism" (p. 17). Hence, we see emerge a consensus between the lay descriptions of stress and the scientific one. The behavioral sciences defined and studied the concept, but the media went further by characterizing us as overwhelmed by stress. Howard Kaplan's (1983) definition of stress may be seen as even closer to the media's depiction of the societal phenomena of stress. For Kaplan, psychosocial stress "reflects the subject's inability

to forestall or diminish perception, recall, anticipation, or imagination of disvalued circumstances, those that in reality or fantasy signify great and/or increased distance from desirable (valued) experiential states, and consequently, evoke a need to approximate the valued states" (p. 196). Of course, the *Time* article did not use these terms. Nonetheless, the essence of the article spoke to the existence of a pervasive perception that people's efforts were not forestalling the fear of losing those things they valued. Hard work and playing by the rules were not sufficient to ward off a feeling that the next threat to our well-being was just around the corner. It is probably not inconsequential that at this time, our economy was slowing from its period of unprecedented postwar expansion. Increased opportunities were no longer guaranteed, and companies were asking for greater sacrifice in exchange for lower security and a dollar that was rapidly diminishing in power. Nor is this economic trend a temporary one, as economists are well aware that the postwar economic boon was a historical period that is not sustainable.

As I have already alluded, there are different ways of conceptualizing stress. It is helpful at this stage to examine how the Age of Stress unfolded within the social and behavioral sciences. Stress in a Freudian sense is more of a battle between levels of subconscious selves than between subconscious selves and external realities. Indeed, for Freud, environmental stress, however conceived, is best seen as an unimportant factor, and even a distractor from understanding of the critical operating mechanisms in the human psyche. People's reactions to external threat were only important inasmuch as they provided insight about subconscious processes developed early in life. It is interesting that Freud himself, caught in the siege of Vienna, with two sons involved in the war as soldiers, wrote about the influence of current factors on the human psyche (1917/1963). But this is an aberration by Freud of Freud, for the comprehensive picture painted by his writings depicts current affairs only as a possible passage for understanding our deeper selves, not as the cause of psychopathology. Indeed, Karen Horney was virtually disbarred by the psychoanalytic community because of her environmentally based departure from Freudian thought (Rubins, 1978). Horney, conducting research during the Depression, postulated the then heretical notion that major psychological dysfunction was often a product of such stressful life events as difficulty paying the rent, buying food, and providing for children.

Early research within psychology and physiology depicted stress in more purely biological terms. Walter Cannon (1932) began a tradition of stress study by investigation into the effects of cold, lack of oxygen, and other environmental stressors. He concluded that biological systems were resistant to low to moderate levels of environmental stressors, but that high-

intensity or ongoing stress was followed by biological breakdown. This tradition was continued by Hans Selye, who many call the father of modern stress research. Selye saw stress as an orchestrated set of bodily defenses that operated in response to noxious physical stimuli (1950, 1951–1956). Using laboratory methods, he noted that organisms reacted in stages. First came the alerting response, then the resistance response, finally culminating with the exhaustion and breakdown response. As was Cannon, Selye was concerned with the physiological responsiveness to physical stressors, and he extrapolated to psychological stress based on this model.

Still closer to current conceptualizations of stress were the contributions of two Harvard colleagues, Lindemann (1944) and Caplan (1964). Their concept of crisis was an original and provocative departure from both the biological traditions of Cannon and Selye, and the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud. Both men were psychoanalysts, but my readings of their work and my personal interactions with Gerald Caplan reveal two unusual minds that were uniquely willing to question the basis of their training and the traditions of their fields.

Lindemann studied the Cocoanut Grove fire in Boston, in which hundreds were caught and many perished. What struck Lindemann and caused him to question psychoanalytic thought was a discovery of something noted earlier by Karen Horney (1937) in her work with men during the Great Depression. Like Horney, Lindemann noted marked psychopathology in survivors for whom he could find no psychopathogenic underpinnings in their early life. Here were people who should have had transient reactions to the fire, but instead remained deeply psychologically troubled. It is also notable, if we are to give realistic credence to history as influencing scientific thought, that Lindemann was a Quaker who fled Nazi Germany because of persecution. He was well aware of the influence of the Holocaust on the refugees coming to Boston in the postwar era.

Gerald Caplan was also deeply influenced by historical context. He came to Israel following the birth of the nation and was profoundly influenced by the psychological hardships of both the Holocaust and its survivors and by people's crises with the new State of Israel, ravaged by war at its birth. A psychodynamic theorist, Caplan developed the concept of *psychological crisis* that he was to take back to Harvard. According to Caplan (1964), normal individuals, when confronted with extreme challenge to their existence, their loved ones, or their well-being, could experience temporary psychological breakdown. If untreated, this temporary state could have profound, lifelong effects on their psychological well-being. In this theory, Caplan was stepping outside of the boundaries of psychoanalytic thought by concluding that major psychopathology could follow in the absence of early life trauma and experience. In so saying, he was rejecting Freud's traditional

distinction between mourning and melancholy, the former, the normal reaction of grief, the latter, the pathological process that was not a reaction to current circumstances, but based on childhood experience. This man who always wore a white physician's coat and bow tie throughout his professional life was challenging the established order. He did so ahead of psychiatry and psychology, even nonpsychodynamic versions, and even went so far as to suggest that short-term crisis intervention of a few sessions was the therapy of choice for such conditions. Long before cognitive psychologists entered the scene, he suggested that crisis was critical because it undermined people's sense of mastery. He was also later, we shall see, the first to understand the importance of social support in the stress process (1974).

As we examine the development of thinking on stress, we see the influence of World War II and war in general as influencing more than Lindemann and Caplan alone. Indeed, the Age of Stress very much began as reflection on war-related stress. In accounts as early as the Civil War, we have reports of "paralysis" and "insanity" in otherwise healthy soldiers attributed to the shock of battle (Kelleet, 1982). During World War I, army psychiatrists coined the term *shell shock*. Following an earlier tradition, linking victims' psychological reactions post–train crash to contraction of the spinal column (called railroad spine), army psychiatrists attributed the psychological breakdown of soldiers to the physical intensity of exploding shells. The World War I physician, T. W. Salmon (1929), saw it differently. He associated soldiers' psychological breakdown to psychosocial rather than physical causes, and recommended four basic principles: (1) Treat immediately, (2) treat near the front line, (3) share the expectation of full recovery, and (4) ensure continuity of community belonging. Salmon's thinking was so out of the *zeitgeist* as to be all but forgotten for another 40 years. Indeed, during World War II, combat stress was once again conceptualized in physical terms as a response to exhaustion, hence the term *combat fatigue*.

Two major stress theorists, who wrote directly out of their own experience during World War II, keenly influenced scientific thinking on the stress phenomena. Bruno Bettelheim (1960) and Victor Frankl (1963) both wrote of their experience as prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. Largely existential in their tone, both depicted the confrontation with stress as a search for meaning amid the challenge of meaninglessness. The concentration camp undermined human existence as it had been known for its victims. Death prevailed in place of life, a society that prided itself on culture produced the Nazi philosophy, and people were treated as subhuman and without identity—a number tattooed to their left arms. Victims were forced to live with constant threat to their lives, exposure to extreme cold and heat, physical discomfort, a total lack of privacy, lack of adequate food, sleep, or

medicine, and loss of loved ones, usually to certain death. This tradition of meaning as the anthesis and healer of stress was also adopted later by Antonovsky (1979), not surprisingly, based on his work with Holocaust survivors in Israel. It has also been revisited in work by Janoff-Bulman (1992) on traumatic stress, and most recently by Meichenbaum (1994) in his work on constructionism and hermeneutics (the interpretation of people's discourse).

Two individuals who may be seen as bridge theorists between the environmental basis of stress and individual interpretation of the stress experience are C. D. Spielberger and I. G. Sarason. Both have offered a lifelong research legacy. The common thread of the fabric of their work is reflected in their separate empirical studies and in their joint pioneering series of 17 volumes on *Stress and Anxiety* (1975 to 1998). Spielberger and Sarason each advanced a view of stress as influenced in rather equal measure by environmental exigencies and personal meaning. Although they are more typically seen as personality theorists, they were each deeply involved in the community psychology movement and Spielberger was, in fact, founding editor of the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. Whether studying test anxiety, airplane controllers, emergency workers, or the process of social support, their respective research laboratories looked for the process of stress within clearly stressful conditions.

THE COGNITIVE REVOLUTION IN PSYCHOLOGY

The early 1970s saw a shift in psychology away from two formative models, behaviorism and humanism. Behaviorism, on one hand, was seen by many as too restrictive a paradigm (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Behaviorism denied the central role of internal processes in determining behavior. Cognitions, subconscious processes, and emotions were depicted as internal processes that could not be observed. Being unobservable, they were relegated to philosophy and outside of the realm of science (Skinner, 1938, 1953). In Seligman's (1975) original formulation of learned helplessness, the reactions of laboratory animals to inescapable punishment was thought to be the cause of helpless behavior in future challenge contexts. Stress in this model was operationalized in terms of punishment or unpredictable circumstances wherein punishment could not be avoided or pleasure achieved. There was no appeal in the original model to emotions or cognitions.

Humanism was also alive and well in psychology in the 1960s and early 1970s. The formulations of such theorists as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow were highly respected and the mainstay of many programs of clinical

cal psychology. Nor can it be said that humanistic psychology was abandoned because of a lack of evidence or inability to operationalize the concepts. In both psychotherapy (Truax & Mitchell, 1971) and education (Aspy & Roebuck, 1974), it was found that empathy was a key therapeutic trait among both therapists and teachers. In other words, it was not necessarily what therapists and teachers did, as much as their acknowledgment of the client or student's positive sense of self and the communication of caring about that self that produced positive outcomes. Many of the research thrusts promulgated by humanism, such as the importance of self-disclosure, the essential nature of positive self-regard, the importance of connectedness with others, and the need for love, respect, and acceptance, were testable hypotheses that excited both clinicians and researchers. With the swing right politically in the country and the departure from the "All You Need Is Love" generation, humanism became lost somewhere in the wind.

I say that humanism became lost, because it is difficult to track its heuristic path in the research literature either on stress or in other mainstream psychology areas. This has often troubled me, because I thought that humanism deserved central stage in the study of psychology. Perhaps it was a personal inclination, but humanism felt good; it felt like something with which I wanted to be associated. In part, humanism lost its own path by splintering into some questionable practices, such as searching unscientifically for Eastern religions and "selling" them as psychology, and a tendency to employ overly optimistic jargon about the sheer wonderfulness of people. If Skinner was to be chastised for being overly deterministic, Rogers and Maslow may have been guilty of being overly optimistic about the grandeur of self-will. Not that what Rogers and Maslow theorized was wrong, but its package became increasingly inconsistent with the hard science emulation that psychology was taking. With the Love Generation beginning to fade along with the breakup of the Beatles, the inclination to follow a theory that championed love, well-being, self-awareness, and linkage to others became out of step with the social zeitgeist.

In part, in preparing this book, I read very carefully the theoretical work of Meichenbaum, Lazarus, and Bandura. In their writing, I have come to think that cognitive behaviorism may have grown out of a melding of these two earlier movements within psychology, behaviorism and humanism, although cognitive behaviorism sees itself as emerging more clearly out of purely behaviorist beginnings. By continuing a focus on behavior, researchers and clinicians could remain true to the push for better measurement of simpler, more basic building-block constructs, and this appealed to many. Cognitions were seen as another set of behaviors and, like overt behaviors, were accessible to the principles of reinforcement, punishment,

and shaping. By focusing on the subjective interpretation of events through cognitions, cognitive behaviors were actually more closely following one of the principle contributions of humanism. Carl Rogers wrote in 1980:

The only reality I can possibly know is the world as I perceive and experience it at this moment. The only reality you can possibly know is the world as you perceive and experience it at the moment. And the only certainty is that those perceived realities are different. There are as many "real worlds" as there are people! (p. 102)

Don Meichenbaum (1977; Meichenbaum & Cameron, 1983), a leading proponent of cognitive behaviorism and one of its founders, emphasizes that people develop problems when their cognitions interfere with their behavior. Self-statements such as "I must be perfect," "Help is only good if it's spontaneous," and "Bad things happen to me because I am a bad person" are obstacles to psychological well-being because they are unachievable and inevitably interfere with positive self-regard. Trained in one of the most purist bastions of behaviorism at the University of Illinois-Urbana, Meichenbaum developed a discomfort with a system that ignored the critical role played by thought and emotions in human behavior. A direct link can be found between his thinking and early humanistic notions of Karen Horney (1937), who felt that psychological problems emerge when the healthy, real self is displaced by an unhealthy, idealized self. Likewise, we can see developmental links between Meichenbaum and Rogers (1956), who felt that the chief cause of psychopathology was the incongruency people experienced when they evaluated themselves through an introjected value system of others, because it denied them experiences that are conducive to growth.

So, for example, if I must be perfect, I cannot enjoy my experiences in research, teaching, family life, and tennis. If I must always be a parent who never becomes angry, I should never have children, because the standard is unachievable and denies me the pleasure of doing pretty well, trying very hard, accomplishing some things, and realizing that I could do better sometimes, but not at all times. Rogers and Skinner debated from their seemingly unbridgeable camps at the 1956 meetings of the American Psychological Association, but any true rapprochement of their ideas took almost 20 more years to percolate and be translated into an integrative system of thought. Meichenbaum was successful I think in identifying the strongest points in two competing viewpoints.

Lazarus (1966) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984) fostered the tradition of cognitive behaviorism in their transactional stress model. They saw appraisals and cognitions as the key to understanding the stress process. Within their model, appraisal acted in two ways. Primary appraisal was the process by which events were judged as to the degree they were threatening,

challenging, or benign. Secondary appraisals were the process by which individuals judged and evaluated the extent to which they had the coping resources to respond successfully to the threat or challenge. Richard Lazarus, together with Susan Folkman, have clearly been the most influential contributors to the psychology of stress and an understanding of the stress process. Their principle contribution lies in acknowledgment of the role of cognition in interpretation of the meaning and mastery of external events that challenge individuals.

At this juncture, I wish to take a step back and evaluate the historical context of the cognitive revolution, especially as it applies to stress. By the late 1970s and the early 1980s, many years had passed since World War II and the experience of the war and the Holocaust. North American psychology was no longer so concerned with the environmental stressors that had motivated the classic study of the American GI, *Men under Stress*, by Grinker and Spiegel (1945), nor were they confronted with the stress of poverty widespread during the Great Depression that so influenced Horney. North America was relatively safe, the economy was good, and even the Cold War had settled into a stalemate with which most people were willing to live and let live. If major stressors are not omnipresent, then it makes sense that attention would turn to more garden-variety life stress. Reviewing the life event lists of Holmes and Rahe (1967), we find that although some major events were represented, many minor events were listed and more likely to be endorsed, because such events are simply more likely to occur daily.

In a major debate regarding whether cognitions were confounded with the study of stress, Dohrenwend, Dohrenwend, Dodson, and Shrout (1984) argued that much of what the cognitive model saw as stressors and coping, was actually stress outcomes. Marital difficulty was as likely to be a stress outcome as it was a cause of stress. Drinking and burying emotions in a sea of denial were listed by Lazarus and Folkman as ways of coping, but Dohrenwend et al. saw them as outcomes of failed coping. I do not wish to enter into this debate at this point, but rather want to underscore that the Dohrenwends had been studying stress in the lives of the poor, where the objective quality of the event plays a more major role in both their model and in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984). Said another way, the difference in the two models lies, in large part, in the focus of their studies, not in the ultimate truth of either theory.

But paradigms produce a slippery slope. They tend to be rapacious, devouring the intellectual territory of the range of possible discovery. Although Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasized the role of the objective environment as one important factor in the stress process, they clearly placed overwhelming emphasis on appraisal of those events. In so doing, objective elements, emotions, and resources play second stage as hand-

maidens to cognitions. Indeed, by placing all these elements in their model, they are able to deflect criticisms by virtue of being all-encompassing. Like many models, however, the case that would reject their model or any aspect of their model evaporates. To be scientific, a theory must be rejectable and the case that would reject it, in whole or part, should be possible in every study that tests the model. Measures, attention, statistics, and hermeneutics become tools of both insight and deception in virtually every scientific schema. With a microscope, we may begin to look for instruments of greater magnification to see even smaller unseen bodies, but we do not point the lens up at the stars. By making snapshots, we miss movements apparent only in natural settings and we begin to develop models that exclude, by attentional atrophy, the appendages of the model that at first only lacked emphasis.

The cognitive model fits the way stress is often studied, and as such is assumed to accurately reflect the nature of stress. Researchers typically either examine everyday events that are ambiguous as to their objective stress quality (e.g., work hassles, interpersonal interactions) or people experiencing the same major stressor (e.g., heart attack, criminal victimization). For ambiguous, low-level stressors and when all persons studied are undergoing the same severe stressor, cognitions play a defining part. Cross the boundaries in time to one of war, or the boundaries of countries to places of social conflict and upheaval, then objective elements again loom larger. What emerges is a model that may not be resilient to time, place, social class, ethnicity, or gender. Otherwise class struggle, the civil rights movement, the battle with sexism, and negotiations for peace need not occur. If they are only in the mind's eye, then we only need convince people to see things a different way. This is the strategy used by management in industry; workers are just not seeing the situation correctly, whereas labor translates stress to objective elements of the environment that require change.

In our research on women undergoing breast biopsy, we found that virtually 100 percent experienced depressed mood the day prior to the biopsy, and most were free of depression three months later if the tumor was found to be benign (Hobfoll & Walfisch, 1984). Individual differences were hardly apparent the day prior to biopsy, but were quite common three months later. Three months postbiopsy, women who faced other objective stress experiences and who were low in sense of mastery continued to be depressed. In this brief period of these women's lives, objective and subjective elements are key to understanding their reactions. Whether an environmental or a cognitive model is the best explanatory system depends, in part, on the moment in time that the psychological photograph is taken. The film of the whole process probably contains elements that are best portrayed by both models.

Three months is hardly enough time to speak of history, but the translation of time into an element of the stress process serves to instruct us that models of stress have temporal elements. Most models acknowledge that time influences processes within their model, but a lack of awareness of the social-historical influences of time on paradigms precludes an awareness that a model may fit better in some circumstances than others. This said, a cognitive model or an environmental model may best describe the phenomenal space within some circumstances and not others. Paradoxically, at any one time or instance, competing models may each describe some major aspect of a phenomenon, even though they appear to obviate one another.

BEWARE WHEN BUYING A THEORY THAT FITS A LITTLE TOO WELL

Although many aspects of my own theory of stress, which I develop in the next two chapters of this volume, have a marked cognitive component, I find myself seeing cognitive influences as particularly deserving of skepticism. By this, I mean that the cognitive revolution and cognitive behaviorism are suspect in another important social-historical sense, beyond the points I have already made. When psychiatrists promote biological models of human behavior, psychiatrists are immediately suspect. Biological models place psychiatrists on the top of the intervention pyramid, as they are the only mental health professionals with full credentials to treat biologically. Psychologists, social workers, and counselors are either attendant to psychiatrists in this model or superfluous. The more purely biological the model, the more other mental health professionals are ancillary. Biological models of psychopathology also supply much greater remuneration to psychiatrists than psychosocial models. Chemical treatment of depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorders pays two to three times the income to a psychiatrist that psychotherapy pays. A psychiatrist can bill four to six patients an hour, in which she might only see one patient in psychotherapy. In a similar manner, many are suspect of psychoanalytic models, because in challenging them, we were told that if only we understood them, we would necessarily believe them. Hence, only a psychoanalyst could judge the validity of psychodynamic theory. In both cases, the principle proponent of the model is also its chief benefactor. This does not *de facto* dismiss their perspective but gives us reason for pause.

When psychologists promulgate a cognitive model of behavior, we must be equally suspicious. Cognitive research is not only more straightforward than psychodynamic research, but also it is easier and probably less expen-

sive than studying biological, sociocultural, and emotional bases of behavior. Cognitive models are most easily given to questionnaire study. They can apply equally well to community residents as to college sophomores, and they are readily given to quantification. If you wish to know what people think, ask them. The fact that in real life psychologists seldom just believe what clients say seldom comes into discussion. Cognitive therapy, because it is most easily studied, becomes the therapy of choice. Is this because we respect science or simplicity? Are we sacrificing insight in the name of parsimony, before we have looked hard enough and deep enough? Psychologists would tend to answer "yes" in the case of biological models versus psychosocial models but become less aggressive in promoting the need not to sacrifice complexity for expediency when competing psychosocial models are considered. In this Age of Stress, we must be more self-aware as we don the robes of what Perry London (1964) so insightfully called the secular priesthood in which psychologists become the shamans of society.

With pressure to conduct therapy in no more than 8–10 sessions, cognitive models may have the best fit with economic demands, but this does not make them better models in any theoretical sense. Indeed, managed health care organizations, by confusing efficiency with effect, are increasingly demanding chemical treatment of psychopathology. Fast food is not *haute cuisine*, and should not be confused with it because its efficient. In better economic times, more long-term therapy may allow easier fit for other intervention models. On another level, psychosocial change might even be more efficient because it is potentially cost effective to affect thousands. Community organizing, fighting crime, training people for better jobs, and combating racism may be both effective and efficient. However, psychologists have not been on the forefront of such study or intervention. If they were, they would probably be more environmentally oriented. But they are not, and social action has always had the problem of lack of a third-party payer. How convenient that cognitive models emphasize personal interpretation; otherwise, they would have to leave their offices and promote social change—it does not pay well, it is not prestigious, and it is somewhere either off in social work, or in Community Psychology, a movement within psychology which, not surprisingly, was center stage during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the heyday of social change, before social change was *démodé*.

Indeed, cognitive psychology has attempted to dislodge itself from other domains of psychology by renaming itself cognitive science. This is an old strategy, but it does no more than calling a hall a foyer. It is an attempt to make more scientific a realm of psychology by association with the harder sciences on campus. It is a paradigm change by force *majeure*, rather than by actually being more scientific. Astrology is astrology and physics is physics;

any tampering with labels is marketing. But it is marketing that is interpreted, and it speaks to the pressures within psychology to be associated more closely with physics than with anthropology or sociology. It is an attempt to place psychology with different bedfellows by denying our history and the nature of our intellectual family tree. It is all too convenient when cognitive behaviorism becomes the model of choice. Indeed, the attempt is already breaking down with the rising acknowledgment of the place of emotion (Lazarus, 1991; Spielberger, Jacobs, Russell, & Crane, 1983), implicit cognitions (Schacter, 1987; which look astoundingly like subconscious processes), early life attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), and existentialism, now explored through cognitive interpretation of the meanings implied by personal narratives (Meichenbaum, 1994).

Like the case of "biologicalization" of behavior in psychiatry, we must at least suspect cognitive psychology, because it makes psychology king. Cognitive models are most consistent with psychological theory and have been, for the most part, championed by psychologists such as Lazarus, Bandura, Meichenbaum, and Seligman. They place psychology at the head of the intellectual pyramid and the intervention food chain. If they do not dismiss psychiatry and social work, they ensure psychologists to be major players. The paradigm fits in place all too neatly. We have ended up a little too near a place that puts us on Park Place and Boardwalk to believe that the scientific role of the dice was entirely free of tampering. Psychology has too much stock in things working out just this way not to be more cautious and scientifically introspective.

DOES A SOCIOHISTORICAL APPROACH MISLEAD US?

This chapter has critiqued stress theory from a sociohistorical perspective, but I do not imagine that I can now set the stage for an alternate paradigm that is free of sociohistorical impact. Rather, it has been my thesis that we continue to be rooted in history. When we study the influence of religious belief on stress, we are examining this psychological phenomenon at a certain time with a certain cohort. Social scientists originally believed that people become more religious as they became older, that the elderly turned to religion. This is partially true; however, it also represents a cohort effect that is historical (Payne, 1988). People who are older at this point in time grew up more religious, and when they became older, they did not so much return to church inasmuch as younger people began to attend in fewer numbers. When we saw church pews filled with the elderly, we assumed that older people were attending in greater numbers. Instead, people who always attended church were getting older. Likewise, how people

react to stress and what they find stressful is shaped by sociohistorical processes that shape their lives. Again, from inside the forest, it is hard to tell the trees.

A sociohistorical approach is more humbling than a purely scientific one that relies religiously on logical positivism. Heraldizing science as the process that will lead to understanding is dangerous. It is not only dangerous because science can create an atomic bomb as well as it can a vaccine for polio, but also it is dangerous because it assumes that science always moves forward. Indeed, this view is unscientific. Science is a process for studying our world. Whether science progresses is itself an empirical question. Not only do avenues of science sometimes lead to dead ends, but also there are many diversions along the scientific route. As such, the current state of the art, as it is called, may have failed to incorporate earlier advances. I have tried to illustrate that because the state of the art is usually consistent with wider research and social trends, it may actually act to censure earlier, contemporary, and future knowledge that is inconsistent with the current paradigm.

Minimally, because research trends tend to be narrow in order to be precise, science tends to shave off ways of viewing phenomena that are inconsistent with those trends. Said another way, we find rooms only behind doors we open. When we enter a room looking for our missing keys, we are unlikely to notice things as dominant as the color of the wallpaper or the Picasso on the wall. We then are in danger of extrapolating to the conclusion that our focus is the inherent, central organizing principle and adopting the false premise that other factors are tangential.

We also have to be careful of considering sociohistorical context because "knowledge is power." I mean this more in the sense of Nietzsche, who questioned Bacon's original idea. Certainly, knowledge creates power, and those who have knowledge are powerful, as Bacon would have it. But, as Foucault (1980) writes, knowledge and power are one. The institutions that create knowledge have power and create further knowledge in ways that foster their power. When knowledge is produced by a certain class (e.g., scientists who are themselves upper middle class and looking to government for research grants), they will not produce knowledge that undermines their power or their attachment to powerful sources of funding. Hence, historical context is critical to understand the nature of power and the knowledge that power produces. Study of Darwinian evolution is linked to capitalism; Lamarckian evolution was historically linked to communism. Capitalism promoted survival of the fittest. Communism wished to see a world in which acquired traits could be passed on to the genetic code of future generations. Arthur Koestler (1971), in his important book *The Case of the Midwife Toad*, observed that evidence of Lamarckian evolution was

witnessed in Western laboratories until specimens pointing to its existence on the footpads of midwife toads were destroyed by agents provocateur in the laboratory that produced it. Such evidence could not be tolerated.

Communism similarly disdained the study of behaviorism and placed obstacles to its advancement. Although such active censorship was not practiced in the West, the funding for behaviorism was strongly supported with research dollars, thus promoting its prominence in psychological thought. More recently, funding for research on the biological basis of behavior in the United States has increased proportional to the decrease in funding of psychosocial research. These trends are linked to a period of conservative government that wished to unlink poverty, crime, and success to the environment, and wished to make these problems a matter of personal responsibility. This is the meaning of knowledge is power, or, as some philosophers state, *power/knowledge* (Foucault, 1980).

If we live in the Age of Stress, we must realize the potency of these broader historical trends within society, scientific trends within psychology, and ulterior motives for explaining stress one way or another. This is not to be confused with conspiracy, as most scientists I know are only armchair politicians and, as a group, prize their scientific integrity above any possible political motivations or personal gain. Nevertheless, psychology would not find that talk therapy is especially effective for depression, while psychiatrists herald the biological basis of depression and its treatment if not for the financial, social, and political constraints and reinforcers that divide these two close professions (Pearlman, 1992). Looking at the same data, surgeons suggest radical mastectomy (complete breast removal) for breast cancer, whereas oncologists suggest lumpectomy (i.e., removal of the tumor and immediately surrounding tissue). The problem cannot therefore lie in the integrity of the evidence. It is easiest sometimes to see these influences, however, when we are looking as an outsider, and not a member of the scientific community in question.

In the chapters that follow, I argue against a strictly cognitive view of stress. I suggest from the outset that the cognitive revolution has misled us in our understanding of the stress process. But this should not be construed to mean that elements of the stress phenomenon are not cognitive, or that cognitive psychology does not provide valuable insights into our understanding of stress. Rather, I will argue that cognitive notions have colonized too much of the territory of inquiry into stress, have misinterpreted elements of the stress process that are environmental as being a matter of appraisal (as opposed to objective reality that is perceived), and have served a Western view of the world that emphasizes control, freedom, and individualized determinism. I suggest instead that resources, not cognitions, are the *primum mobile* on which stress is hinged. Indeed, I argue that many resources

imagine that I am not biased in my perspective by the sociocultural world created in my parents' and grandparents' kitchen would be as naive as thinking that the way I raise my children, interact with my wife, or the food I enjoy are independent of the long historical caravan upon which I have been traveling. In the coming chapters, I hope to continue this discussion of sociohistorical influences; respect for the contributions of the philosophy of science makes no other route possible, logical, or, in the end, scientific.

This is something I owe to the historians of science. I adopt the methodological precaution and the radical but unaggressive scepticism which makes it a principle not to regard the point in time where we are now standing as the outcome of a teleological progression which it would be one's business to reconstruct historically: that scepticism regarding ourselves and what we are, our here and now, which prevents one from assuming that what we have is better than—or more than in the past. (Foucault, 1980, p. 49)

Finally, although this sociohistorical viewpoint may be less well traveled in psychology, I can take little credit for having a unique perspective, as there is a rising tide of voices adopting a more sociohistorically rooted viewpoint. American psychology's devotion to Cartesian logic attempts to isolate the nature of knowledge, and its method attempts to ensure that "representations correspond to reality—so a fixed reality means a fixed method" (Rorty, 1986). Skinner spent as much time arguing for the philosophical correctness of his determinist position, as he did in the laboratory producing data (1948, 1953, 1978). The Hegelian tradition, more popular in a European view of science than an American one, assumes that what we depict as rationality is to be viewed relatively, and in the framework of social and historical trends. We see cracks and fissures opening in the Cartesian tradition in recent contributions, and sometimes in direct attacks from the quarters of feminist, ethnic minority, and qualitative scholars in psychology and sociology. By adopting a more relativist tradition, I hope that we can both explore the phenomenon of stress and understand the influences of greater social forces on our methods, models, and interpretations.

are cognitive. However, I would reason that people's economic and social resources primarily shape cognitions, not vice versa (see also Allen & Britt, 1983). Cognition is a player, not the play.

I must clearly acknowledge at the outset that I am subject to the same influences, biases, and blinders as others. To say otherwise would make me guilty of what Mandelbaum (1979) calls the *self-excepting fallacy*, whereby I see paradigms as lading others' facts with theory, but not my own. Both cannot be true. One of the most influential lectures I recently attended was by Don Meichenbaum, who spoke of how his view of psychology was influenced not in the hallowed halls of academia insomuch as it was a reflection of his mother's kitchen table. He spoke about how her view of the world and the nature of the insights gleaned in their conversations became the essence of his mode of intervention and his model of psychology. I thought this was a major insight and instructive on Meichenbaum's part. In thinking about what he said, I find myself seeing the environment as critical because I struggled with rough city life in childhood, and because of the years I spent in Israel, where what is occurring around you is a matter of life and death, and where crowded buses are silent on the half-hour to hear the news broadcast. My own cognitive leanings depend, at least in part, on my early exposure to a Jewish way of arguing at the table over points of religion, politics, and social issues, endless conversations in which persuasive argument, tinged with spirituality and a large dose of emotionality won the day, and the respect of elders.

In this vein, drinking alcohol was disdained in my upbringing, not because it was bad for you, but because it clouded thought, and thought (read cognition) was what separated us from other nations (*goyim* in Yiddish). Clouded thought was disdained like the plague. In so saying, this model that I was raised with, and which is imbued in the culture that defined the perimeters of my upbringing, also prized emotionality. You were to feel emotion, express emotion, and cherish emotion. Thought, free of emotion, was as foreign as not thinking. Finally, discussion at our kitchen table placed social action on the forefront, as it was critical to an historical period when Jews were moving from the shadows of anti-Semitic America to vocal expression of Jewish causes, be they fighting anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish quotas, promoting Israel, or liberating Soviet Jewry. Treating the environment as the status quo was entirely inconsistent with this cultural context, even as I rebelled against it in the mandatory "What does religion offer me?" period of late adolescence. When others preached that blacks needed to appreciate their place, or that "Things aren't really that bad" (i.e., change your mind, not the problem), my family, my rabbi, and my teachers answered that Jews must align with African Americans because prejudice is real, exists in both overt and covert behavior, and must be fought by social change. To

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