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Kurt Lewin's wartime work: A re-examination of a classic study in the context of morale,
culture, and national character

by

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to the broader understanding of the historical context of Kurt Lewin's (1942a) classic study, *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits*. This study is remembered in traditional histories of American social psychology as the experimental finding that group decisions were more effective at changing opinions than lectures. This re-analysis of Lewin's study paints a more complete picture of the issues which were of interest to American social psychologists during the Second World War. Lewin's work can be seen as an example of the collaboration of social psychologists with anthropology and other disciplines. In addressing the social problems of the war, namely morale and food habits, Lewin's study exemplifies the evolution of applied psychology in the context of culture. It also illustrates the tensions between creating unity, or an American national character, and understanding culture.

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Specifically, I wish to thank my Committee for their patience in the delays associated with this work. I would also like to take this opportunity to apologize to the late Dr. Dick Dillon. It had been my belief that nothing could be more horrible than his statistics class, however, I have discovered writing a thesis is a million times worse.

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To those of you who come after, know a thesis has a life of its own. It robs you of your life and your sanity. It takes you to places you never thought you would go, from the depths of despair to the highest jubilation. Be prepared. Pack well. Surround yourself with wonderful people. Believe in yourself when no one else will. Laugh. Cry. Embrace it. Hate it. Surrender your sanity and maybe you will survive the journey.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Kurt Lewin remains one of social psychology's most beloved and remembered figures over a half century after his death. His works had a pivotal impact on the field and individuals within the field of social psychology specifically and the social sciences more generally. Through his work on group dynamics and action research, he challenged social scientists to explore new avenues of research and be willing to use scientific knowledge to improve the lives of ordinary citizens. While many of Lewin's studies continue to be remembered by historians, the context of some has been forgotten. This thesis sets out to re-examine one classic Lewinian study, primarily through a review of the *Papers of Margaret Mead and the South Pacific Ethnographic Archives* housed in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, as well as other published works, in order to come to a greater understanding of the social and political influences which were responsible for its creation. By doing so, a greater understanding of the Committee on Food Habits, morale, culture and national character, aspects neglected from most remembrances of Lewin's works, will emerge.

This is a departure from most traditional histories of social psychology. Many chronicles of social psychology, from Gordon Allport (1954) to E. E. Jones (1985), have focused on the key role of experimentation in social psychology and used important findings without their original contexts to create a history of the field. G. Allport (1954) noted that the laboratory and experimentation were new streams in social psychology in the early twentieth century: "The fact is that empiricism and positivism did not enter social

psychology to any appreciable extent until the decade of the 1920s. The ideals of objectivity and precision then rapidly assumed a dominant position” (p. 48). This has forced historical accounts to disregard times during which social psychologists either had contact with other fields of inquiry or dedicated large portions of their research to the solution of social issues. Historians focus on what Apfelbaum (1992) notes as social psychology’s “aspiration of becoming a ‘hard science’ to explore universal laws concerning the fundamental mechanism of social nature and relations” (p. 532). This emphasis on the experimental side of social psychology represented the wider belief by psychologists that the experiment, preferably conducted in the laboratory, was the best method for the construction of social knowledge. In fact, as Capshew (1999) described the nature of the first half of the 20th century, “The laboratory assumed an almost religious significance in this period as psychologists fervently asserted the claims of science in the study of human nature” (p. 4).

However, more recent historians have included in their accounts the political and social contexts for experimentation (Collier, Minton & Reynolds, 1991; Morawski & Bayer, 2003). Morawski and Bayer (2003) for example, shift the focus from recounting a series of experimental findings as “pivotal points in social psychology’s development as scientific” (Morawski & Bayer, 2003, p. 224) to the more general view that “social psychology’s evolution must be understood . . . as plural, multisited, and morally and politically inspired” (Morawski & Bayer, 2003, p. 224). In their view, the context for all social psychological work needs to be accounted for by the historian.

This thesis has followed in their footsteps by re-examining one classic work, namely, Kurt Lewin's (1942a) *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits*. In this study, Lewin found that women who were asked to come to an individual decision about changing food habits after a group discussion were more willing to try new foods than women who heard a lecture. Most histories remember this study purely as a finding about group influence on the individual's decision making process. More detailed histories, such as that found in Collier, Minton and Reynolds (1991), acknowledge that this was a result of food habit studies done during the war with Margaret Mead; however, the paragraph on the finding continues to neglect the larger contexts for this work. A broader remembrance of the study allows for a clearer understanding of how social psychology has contributed to addressing social issues, as well as allowing for the emergence of a broader picture of the political and social forces, mainly morale, culture and national character, which impacted the creation of Lewin's (1942a) study.

The second chapter of this thesis will begin by providing a more detailed summary of this study than done by traditional historians. With a more detailed understanding of the individual study, attention will be turned to the organization responsible for the creation of this study, the National Research Council's Committee on Food Habits. While Lewin's work is remembered as a product of the war, an understanding of the Committee which sponsored it is neglected from most histories of the field. By neglecting this Committee, the other works Lewin produced for it are also neglected. His classic study needs to be

remembered not only as a work created for a Committee, but as part of a series of studies Lewin conducted on various aspects of food habits.

The Committee on Food Habits, the body responsible for the creation of Lewin's classic study (1942a), came into existence because of a recognition of the nutritional deficits that remained in the United States after the Depression. Dr. Wilson of the Department of Agriculture, first identified the problem of malnutrition and wanted to find "answers to the questions that come up continually in our attempts to improve the nutrition and living habits of the peoples of the world" (Guthe & Mead, 1945, p. 13). The Committee, with anthropologist Margaret Mead as the executive secretary, believed improved nutrition was essential to victory in the war. This led a variety of social scientists to address not only issues of nutrition but to explore food habits in depth in order to find methods to improve social conditions. The Committee on Food Habits represents one of the groups of social scientists who believed that a multi-disciplinary collaboration between the sciences was essential to the war effort. This collaboration between the disciplines has also been neglected in the history of the field. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on the collaboration between psychologists and anthropologists, as their cooperation was responsible for the creation of Lewin's work. The understanding of this collaboration is also essential in a re-telling of Lewin's classic study because this collaboration brought new methods and areas of exploration, such as anthropologists' interest in culture, to the field of psychology. These new avenues of interest seem very out of place in the field of psychology without being placed in context of a multi-discipline approach to the food habit studies.

Lewin's classic study (1942a), also represents several of the themes which dominated his work, particularly groups, and action research. As will be shown, the study of groups was an emerging theme in social psychology during the war, one which played an important role in the Committee on Food Habits' and Lewin's collaboration as they set out to understand the eating habits of the subgroups and cultures within the United States. With this understanding of the food habits of groups, the Committee wished to translate scientifically determined findings into action research. Action research, a term coined by Lewin, occurred when social scientists applied theories to real life situations in order to solve social problems (Cherry & Deaux, 2004). Lewin's classic study, created for the Committee, provides the quintessential example of action research. This study produced a method of change which could be applied immediately to groups of individuals in order to have them change their food habits.

Chapter Three will address morale. Morale was the key to the formation of the Committee on Food Habits as it was believed that the war could not be won without a strong civilian morale. Morale was desperately needed in the United States, as centuries of racism had divided the country. This thesis will look at the racial divide within the country and will explore the shift from a traditional belief that personality was biologically determined to the notion that culture had the greatest influence on individual development. This departure from the traditional racial views was spearheaded, in part, by anthropologist Franz Boas. Boas was the mentor of Mead, and it is clear that his ideas about culture influenced Mead and the Committee on Food Habits' work.

After a brief look at the racialized ideas held by many members of the American population, this thesis will address morale in the context of the Committee on Food Habits, as it is my contention that without the need for wartime morale, the Committee on Food Habits would not have been created. The American government needed to increase citizen's willingness to make food sacrifices and embrace rationing. If civilians were willing to make these sacrifices and believed doing so would aid the war effort, the government believed American morale could be preserved. As will be shown, food related morale was very important to the Committee as they demonstrated repeatedly that food habits "are the primary considerations for the maintenance of morale and spirits" (Metraux, 1942, p. 6). The Committee studied the morale-related effects of specific foods, as well as searching to understand which food losses due to rationing would have the greatest impact on morale (Committee on Food Habits, 1942a). Lewin's own works for the Committee that dealt with morale will be explored at this time.

With an understanding of morale, in Chapter Four this thesis will turn to the importance of culture in the field of psychology during the war. A re-examination of the works produced by Lewin and the Committee on Food Habits reveals that there was greater interest in culture than standard histories looking at social psychology as an experimental discipline would indicate. While it would be fair to say that culture has never been part of mainstream psychological thought (Seeley, 2003), it did play a role in the development of the field as it appeared in places such as the collaboration of psychologists and anthropologists on the Committee on Food Habits. While the term was poorly defined by those using it at the time, culture is one of the key themes that develops in the

Committee and Lewin's works. Food habits were defined by the Committee as "the culturally standardized set of behaviors in regard to food manifested by individuals who have been reared within a given cultural tradition" (Guthe & Mead, 1943, p. 20). Therefore, to change the eating habits of the nation, the cultures which supported them had to be understood. Many examples of the Committee and Lewin's works will be used to illustrate the forgotten role of culture in the history of social psychology.

It is through the exploration of culture that a less apparent theme emerges in this body of works, the theme of national character. National character is the subject of the fifth chapter of this thesis. The need to create a standardized food character emerges in the Committee's works. Several of the works to be discussed in this paper will show that the Committee was looking for generalities in eating habits, as they hoped to create a unified America through the standardization of food. The work on national character done by the Committee illustrates a conflict which developed in their work. On one hand, the Committee on Food Habits was struggling with the need to unite the civilians of the United States. On the other hand, they wished to protect the cultural diversity of the country. The Committee was forced to balance culture and character because of the Second World War and the need for strong civilian morale.

It is within these larger contexts that I will re-examine Lewin's (1942a) classic study *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits*. I will show that while traditional histories of the field are correct in their assertion that this study found that group decisions were more successful than lectures at changing opinions they are missing many other important aspects of this

work. The traditional histories neglect to mention that social psychology included applied research which explored morale, culture, national character through a multi-discipline collaboration. This thesis will place Lewin's classic study back into these contexts, in order to produce a richer and more complete understanding of both the classic study (Lewin, 1942a) and the field of social psychology at mid-century.

Chapter Two

Lewin's place within the Committee on Food Habits

The opening chapter of this thesis introduced the contexts which contributed to the creation of Lewin's (1942a) classic study. In order to understand the broader contexts of this work, the Committee on Food Habits and Lewin's place within this Committee, needs to be explored. It was, after all, the Committee on Food Habits which was directly responsible for the creation of Lewin's work. However, before this agency and the place of the classic work within the Committee is addressed, it is essential to understand the classic text. Lewin's research for *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942a) was conducted using 120 women who had been organized in small groups of 13 to 17 for Red Cross Home Nursing courses. The study set out to determine which method of education, a lecture or a group decision, would be more effective at altering food habits. The group decision differed from the lecture in that it asked the women to make educated decisions regarding food habits, while women in the lecture were provided information without being asked to consider habit change. The group decision was a choice the women were to make independently regarding their food habits. Choices were made following a discussion about these habits. Lewin was careful to note that the decisions did not reflect a collective "resolution" of group members but rather reflected a subtle influence on individual decision-making in a social group. Each housewife decided what she would do at home, while "the group setting gives the incentive for the decision, and facilitates and reinforces it" (Lewin, 1942a p. 5).

In Lewin's study, those in the lecture condition were presented material which linked the problem of nutrition to the war effort. The vitamin, mineral and economic value of three variety meats, heart, brain and kidney, were stressed. The women were provided with recipes to make these meats as palatable as possible. Those in the group decision were presented with the same material through a cooperation between a group leader and a nutrition expert. They were given a short introduction to the problem of nutrition during the war. The difficulties associated with changing opinions were also stressed, and the women were told how successful a direct appeal to housewives, such as themselves, would be. The experts turned to a direct discussion of why these meats had been avoided in the past and what could be done by the women to overcome these problems. Women in the group-decision condition were also provided with recipes to aid them in the preparation of these new foods.

In a follow up, seven days after the presentation, Lewin (1942a) found that only 10% of the women who had participated in the lecture condition had been persuaded to try a glandular meat that had been featured in the talk. In contrast, 52 % of those in the group decision condition tried one of the variety meats. Lewin (1942a) found that group decisions resulted in more women deciding to try a new meat. He determined that this preliminary study suggested the superiority of this method of opinion change over that of a lecture.

This brief summary provides more information about this classic study than traditional histories of social psychology. However, it is the goal of this thesis, not only to understand the study, but to understand the broader contexts of its creation. The first of

such contexts which will be explored is the organization which was responsible for the creation of Lewin's study and other food habits research, the National Research Council's Committee on Food Habits. By placing Lewin's study back within the framework of the Committee, the other contexts responsible for the creation of this work develop more clearly.

The Committee on Food Habits resulted from the recognition of the problem of malnutrition in the United States. The nutritional deficits of the country were first identified by Dr. M. L. Wilson, of the Department of Agriculture, in November of 1940 (Guthe & Mead, 1943). Wilson suggested that the physical fitness of the country, which included nutrition, was a necessary part of national defence programs. With this in mind, in December of 1940 the National Research Council established two separate committees to address nutritional problems (Guthe & Mead, 1943). One committee dealt with the biological aspects of nutrition under the Division of the Medical Sciences of Biology and Agriculture and became known as the Food and Nutrition Board. The focus of the Food and Nutrition Board was on the biological aspects of nutrition. The other, the central interest of this thesis, the Committee on Food Habits was assigned to the Division of Anthropology and Psychology (Guthe & Mead, 1943; Wilson, 1940). The Committee on Food Habits focused on how to change food habits: "The difference is between the biological motivation on the one hand and nutritional value on the other hand. The first falls within our scope and the second is the concern of the Food and Nutrition Board" (Committee on Food Habits, 1942c, p. 2).

With its role clearly established, the Committee on Food Habits set out with the difficult task of changing the food habits of all Americans.¹ Early in the history of the Committee, members determined in *Anthropological memorandum on diet habits* (Committee on Food Habits, 1941a) that most undesirable food habits in America were due to the unavailability of nutritious foods such as milk, green vegetables, and oranges and the lack of financial resources to buy these items. The Committee argued that by making these foods more readily available “there is no reason to believe that American psychological preferences will not fall in line with such changed food conditions” (Committee on Food Habits, 1941a, p. 1). However, most of their subsequent work suggests the problem of changing food habits was not as simple as they had imagined. Their work began to focus on education campaigns in order to alter and improve American food habits.

The Committee’s goal for the civilian population was “educating people to include the findings of the science of nutrition in the way in which they plan meals and choose food, [as] this knowledge will alter their attitude toward eating” (Guthe & Mead, 1945, p. 13). Through the use of education the Committee planned to impart new standards of eating which would use available foods and improve nutrition across the entire nation. They were aware this was a challenging task because of the diversity of peoples and food habits which made up the United States, a theme which will be explored later in this thesis.

¹It should be noted that much of the Committee on Food Habits’ work, especially from 1944 to 1945, dealt with issues of post-war feeding of allies and enemies overseas. Lewin’s work did not address this topic. This thesis will limit its discussion to the Committee’s work on the food habits of American civilians.

However, they were optimistic that with the use of applied scientific research and the support of the people whose habits they were attempting to alter, American food habits could be changed.²

In December of 1941, Margaret Mead was invited to join the Committee on Food Habits as its executive secretary (Guthe & Mead, 1943). Mead accepted this position and in January 1942 took the post of executive secretary for the Committee in Washington, D.C. Mead brought to the Committee an interest in both psychology and anthropology. While she conducted her doctoral work in Columbia's school of anthropology, her first interest had been psychology. She had finished her psychology degree at Barnard and was contemplating completing a Master of Arts in psychology at Columbia. However, Mead was turned off by what she saw as an over reliance on mental tests, the narrow-mindedness of psychology, and the racism and sexism which plagued the discipline (Lapsley, 1999). At Columbia, after attending several of Boas' lectures, Mead decided to switch to anthropology. Although anthropology became her new major, she remained sensitive to the psychological aspects within cultures and individuals (Lapsley, 1999).

It is likely that it was Mead's interest in psychology that led her to Kurt Lewin, which in turn led to their cooperation on the Committee on Food Habits. The two had met several times prior to the war. While at the University of Iowa from 1935 to 1945, Lewin had the practice of hosting informal meetings or conferences which were open to all

²In the early Committee on Food Habits papers, approximately 1940-1942, there was an ongoing discussion on the use of vitamin fortified food as the preferred method of improving nutrition. However, the use of vitamins disappears from the archives in 1942 and the Committee turns to education as the only discussed method for changing food habits and improving nutrition.

scholars willing to share ideas (Marrow, 1969). These multi-disciplinary meetings brought together psychologists such as Gordon Allport and Gardner Murphy, with anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. It was here that Mead first met Lewin. She remembered her meetings with Lewin fondly, saying “. . . Kurt was like the fire around which other people gathered for warmth and for light by which to read their own thoughts more clearly” (Marrow, 1969, p. 91). Not only did these meetings bring Mead and Lewin together, they also provided a place where anthropologists and psychologists shared ideas, which was an important trend in the social sciences during the 1940s.

It appears it was a shared interest in topics such as morale and culture (both will be discussed in subsequent chapters) that fostered the often forgotten collaboration between psychology and anthropology. This merger, which existed within the Committee on Food Habits, was also explored by other social scientists during the war years. Psychologist Otto Klineberg (1940) suggested that the similarities between anthropology and psychology could foster overlap. He believed that “psychology [was] concerned with individual performance and anthropology with group behaviour” (Klineberg, 1940, p. 3), and by amalgamating the two, a clearer picture of human behaviour and cultural problems would emerge.

Linton (1945), an anthropologist, also noted the developing partnership between psychology and anthropology which appeared during the 1940s. He wrote:

psychology, anthropology and sociology have each been trying to come to a systematic study of the interrelationship between the individual, society and culture

. . . much work can be done in isolation but when they collaborate their emerges a new science devoted to the dynamics of human behavior. (Linton, 1945, p. 2)

Linton (1945) argued that for this merger to be successful, scientists had to be willing to break down traditional barriers between the fields and be willing to educate and train people in several disciplines rather than one.

Psychologist D. Cartwright (1948), reflecting back at the work conducted during the war, further affirmed the existence of a multi-disciplinary collaboration during the war:

A significant consequence of the wartime developments has been a blurring of the boundaries between traditionally defined academic disciplines within the social sciences. Social psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and economists worked together in governmental agencies, and it was frequently difficult to distinguish the work of one from that of another. Although each agency had its own special problems and objectives, rarely did research confine itself within the traditional boundaries of single academic disciplines. Most will agree that this wartime experience was highly beneficial, and there is good reason to believe that inter-disciplinary cooperation will become even more common in the coming years. (p. 335)

The possibility of long term collaboration as noted by Cartwright was shared by others as well. For example, Riesman, Reuel & Glazer (1950), noted that “the excitement of trying to build a nondepartmentalized curriculum in the social sciences was shared by a number of colleagues . . . “ (p. xi). These examples show a trend toward multi-disciplinary collaborations existed both within the Committee, as well as outside of it.

In the context of the Committee on Food Habits, the sponsors of the classic Lewinian work, this collaboration is also evident. From the beginning, Wilson, who first identified the problem of malnutrition, envisioned a multi-disciplinary committee (Marrow, 1969) which would mix scientific facts about nutrition with interpretations of the socio-cultural factors which affected “food folkways” (Guthe & Mead, 1943, p. 9) across the United States. Marrow (1969) noted that Wilson:

had long dreamed of applying social sciences to problems of social change. The emergencies created by subsequent wartime food rationing proved the possibility of making his dream come true, and he asked anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists to work with him on the Committee on Food Habits. (pp. 128-129)

While multi-disciplinary in nature, the Committee on Food Habits relied heavily on anthropological insight. Wilson (1940) wrote to Benedict that “we are making a good deal of progress in applying cultural anthropology to our agricultural problems” (p. 1). She replied: “The whole problem is part of all that anthropologists study of cultural change” (Benedict, 1940, p. 1). Mead (1943) further contended that “the approach of the Committee on Food Habits relies rather heavily on cultural anthropology” (p. 2). While anthropological methods were seen as dominating the work of the Committee, psychologists played an important role as well:

The psychologists in this particular partnership, which has been about three-quarters anthropological and a quarter psychological, has contributed the experiments. Anthropology is an observational science, not an experimental science. The anthropologists have made systematic studies of existing behavior,

and the psychologists have done the experiments in method of change based on a previous study of the culture. (Committee on Food Habits, 1945, p. 4)

Lewin (1943b) also noted that his own work “tried to combine approaches of cultural anthropology with quantitative methods of psychology” (p. 35), which further illustrates the importance of collaboration in the context of this body of work. As noted earlier, Lewin was brought into this multi-disciplinary Committee by its executive secretary Margaret Mead. In an interview with Marrow (1969), Mead could not recall if it was she or Lewin who suggested the collaboration between the Committee on Food Habits and Lewin and his students in Iowa. Mead noted that once he had joined the Committee:

Kurt’s imagination turned first to experiment . . . He set up a laboratory to work on the best psychological approaches to change, with food habits as the setting for this research, but his real interest, of course, was far wider even than how the people of the United States, or of the world for which we were also trying to plan, could learn to eat wisely and well. (Marrow, 1969, p. 129)

Lewin brought the psychological experimentation to Mead’s observational anthropological work. The combination of the two exemplifies the multi-discipline collaboration of mid-century. A re-examination of Lewin’s (1942a) classic study in the context of the Committee on Food Habits, is an example of the often forgotten multi-discipline works which were being produced in the era of World War II.

There are several reasons why the mention of this multi-discipline collaboration may be neglected for traditional histories of social psychology. Jones (1985) argued that while the collaboration began to emerge, the disciplines remained unique and should be

studied in their respective fields. Therefore, he felt it was unnecessary and unproductive to focus on this collaboration. Also, the collaboration was short lived. In the period immediately after the war these interdisciplinary programs continued to flourish, but according to Shelley Patnoe (1988), in time these organizations “fractured along disciplinary line” (p. 14). Patnoe noted that collaboration was a fad which developed because of the success of wartime work on social problems. Although these collaborations did not continue in the postwar period, an acknowledgment of the multi-disciplinary work during the war years is essential to the understanding of social psychology at that time.

With a basic understanding of the Committee, attention can now be turned to specific interests which Lewin brought to the Committee. To begin with it should be noted that Lewin had exhibited an interest in food habits prior to the war. In the 1930s, Lewin had looked at how preschool teachers could change the eating habits of poor eaters (Loye, 1971; Marrow, 1969). Lewin was also drawn to issues surrounding groups as well as action research, which will both be discussed momentarily. His interest in culture, while noted here, will be saved until the discussion of the context of culture in the Committee on Food Habits’ work, later in this thesis.

One of Lewin’s greatest interests was the desire to understand small groups. This interest reflects a trend in social psychology at mid-century. Prior to World War II, the study of individuals had dominated American psychology and little attention was paid to social groups. However, the social problems arising from the Great Depression allowed for groups to become increasingly acceptable in the field of social psychology (Collier et al., 1991; Danziger, 2000). In the 1954 *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Kelley and

Thibaut noted that between 1935 and 1954 there was an increase in the literature regarding groups.

Lewin moved away from studying the individual because he believed “instances of individual behavior had no intrinsic meaning. Their significance could be assessed only in terms of the situation in which they occurred. Group phenomena were part of the situation” (Danziger, 2000, p. 341). Therefore, to understand the individual, their relationship to other individuals or groups needed to be addressed (Patnoe, 1988). Lewin had concluded that many of the social problems, such as anti-Semitism, which emerged in the 1930s and early 1940s, reflected problems within and between groups (Collier et al., 1991). Since these were group problems, Lewin believed solutions could most easily be found by addressing the group and not the individuals within the group. Lewin’s work on groups led to the development of new techniques and concepts which he referred to as Group Dynamics (Tolman, 1948). Through these techniques Lewin wished to explore how groups functioned, the impact members had on each other and how groups changed (Collier et al., 1991). This interest in groups, particularly modifying group behaviour, was demonstrated in his classic study, *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits*, as Lewin (1942a) attempted to uncover an effective method of group change.

This acknowledgment of the importance of the group led Lewin to create several theories about the importance of groups in an individual’s life. One of these theories was that an individual’s personality derived from the person’s life-space. A life-space consisted of all group memberships, from small groups, such as marriage and family, to larger

groups, such as religious communities or countries (Collier et al. 1991; Herman, 1995).

This notion of groups is also evident in Lewin's famous Field Theory. In this theory Lewin stated that $B=F(P,E)$. The equation noted that behaviour (B) was a function (F) of an interaction between a person (P) and that person's environment (E) (M. Lewin, 1997). The environment in this equation referred to all external influences on the individual, including group membership. Therefore, to understand behaviour both the individual and the environment had to be understood.

This interest in groups is found in several works Lewin conducted for the Committee on Food Habits. His classic study *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin 1942a) highlighted the importance of the individual within the context of the group. It was a follow-up to a preliminary study found in the *Papers of Margaret Mead and the South Pacific Ethnographic Archives* at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Conducted by Ben Willerman (1942), under the direction of Lewin, the earlier study, *Group Decision and Request as Means of Changing Food Habits*, set out to test if group decisions arising from a discussion were more effective than individual decisions at changing food habits. This study differed from Lewin's follow up, as it asked the men to come to a group resolution regarding change, while Lewin's (1942a) classic work asked individuals to consider the problem in the context of the group.

Conducted using eight cooperative male dormitories at the State University of Iowa, the goal of the study was to see which method would increase whole-wheat bread consumption. All groups were presented with a letter which asked them to change their

bread consumption food habits. Half the dormitories were in the group decision condition. The letter in this condition provided information about the study, gave the percentage of whole-wheat bread consumed by the men in the past week, and asked them to come to a decision as a group about how much they would increase their whole-wheat bread consumption in the following week. Those in the request condition were provided with the same information but while they were encouraged to discuss the issue, they were not asked to come to a group decision regarding increased consumption.

Willerman (1942) concluded, "The group decision method seems to create a more favorable attitude; the individuals are more eager to succeed; and their wish to cooperate is more independent of their personal likes and dislikes" (pp. 8-9). When asked to think of the problem as a group, people were more willing to cooperate for the betterment of the group. However, group decisions were only successful if they were supported by a strong majority. If too many members of the group did not wish to increase consumption a "kickback" effect occurred, in which consumption of whole wheat bread significantly decreased. In a more democratic setting, where the group came to a consensus on habit change, group decisions were more effective at changing food habits than requests.

Lewin (1942a) and Willerman's (1942) findings, which supported the use of group decisions in either the form of a group resolution or an individual decision in the context of the group, had implications for both psychology and anthropology. It showed, according to Mead, that "groups of people can do a thing better when they themselves decide upon it" (Marrow, 1969, p. 131). When given the information and a choice, groups of people were more willing to make difficult food habit choices which would benefit all

Americans during the war.

The implications of these findings were used by Lewin in other works outside the Committee on Food Habits. For example, in the Harwood studies of industrial workplaces, employees were divided into groups where informal meetings were held in which employees could discuss how to increase production. It was found that a “substantial increase in productivity was reached and later maintained for five months while other groups in the factory showed no significant increase during this same period” (Van Elteren, 1993, p. 78). This study demonstrates that this method of change was not limited to food habits, but could be applied to other group settings.

Groups were not the only interest Lewin shared with the Committee on Food Habits. By considering a broader historical picture, one can see that the laboratory approach to psychology was challenged by the social problems of the Great Depression and the Second World War. During this time period, “social action had become more acceptable and gained a certain intellectual respectability” (Danziger, 2000, p. 340). A growing number of social psychologists believed they could best address social problems through their research expertise. Many of those who made up the Committee on Food Habits wished to address social issues through applied research (Guthe & Mead, 1945). The goal of the Committee on Food Habits was not to create theories about food habits, but rather to find practical solutions to the problem of nutrition in the 1940s.

Lewin’s interest in applied work extends beyond his collaboration with the Committee on Food Habits. He “is credited with the courage to experiment on real world problems and with the ingenuity to bring complex situations into the laboratory”

(Danziger, 1990, p. 1). Lewin hoped to make “psychology a practical science without sacrificing analytical rigor” (Capshe, 1999, p. 190). Lewin is remembered in most histories of psychology for “his emphasis on balance between theory and experimentation, [and] between pure and the applied” (Levine & Rodrigues, 1999, p. 217).

Lewin’s interest in balancing both experimental and applied research developed from his adherence to Ernst Cassirer’s perspective on experimentation. This approach questioned the validity of experimentation stating that “no matter how many studies are conducted under artificial laboratory conditions, one still remains ignorant of the relevance of these studies for social conduct outside the laboratory” (Danziger, 2000, p. 341). Therefore, for Lewin, all types of experiments provided theories of behaviour which had to be tested in the social world.

It was his use of experiments in real life settings coupled with Lewin’s argument that there was “a close interaction between theory and practice” (Capshe, 1999, p. 225) which solidified the development of action research. Action research allowed for the testing of theories in real-life situations (Patnoe, 1988). According to Lewin (1997):

The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice. (pp. 202-3)

Lewin believed applied research which could be used to address societal issues was the preferable method of examination by those in psychology. He encouraged social scientists

to move from the laboratory in order to conduct experiments on social issues as they appeared in the real world. His classic work (Lewin, 1942a) is an excellent example of applied social psychological research because these experimental findings were derived from real world groups, and the findings could be applied directly to groups to create immediate social change. The desire by Lewin and the Committee to use applied research in the study of food habits echoes Wilson's desire for the Committee. From the onset Wilson envisioned a Committee that would aid the war effort by developing concrete solutions to the problems of nutrition (Guthe & Mead, 1943). The urgency of the war did not permit the development of theories which are often remembered in the history of social psychology. Rather, researchers were forced to develop and test solutions in real world situations, an aspect often forgotten in many traditional histories of the field.

This chapter has placed Lewin's (1942a) classic study back within its most immediate context, the context of the Committee on Food Habits. A brief summary of his classic study provided more details than can be found in most traditional histories. However, even the summary neglected the most important context for the creation of this work, the Committee on Food Habits. It was this Committee which charged Lewin with the task of finding a method which could be used to alter American food habits. By re-examining the Committee, several often overlooked themes emerge. First, the Committee and Lewin's works relied heavily on a multi-discipline approach. While various disciplines worked together at this time, this thesis focuses on the collaboration between anthropology and psychology as it is the most evident collaboration in the Committee on Food Habits. Through this collaboration, Lewin's interest in groups appears. Finally, the

importance of the applied aspects of the field of psychology emerge. Now, with an understanding of Lewin's place within the Committee on Food Habits, the other contexts for the creation of Lewin's study can be understood.

Chapter Three:

Morale Through Food: The role of morale in the Committee on Food Habits' work

Now that the Committee on Food Habits' role in Lewin's study has been explored, this thesis will turn its attention to one of the larger contexts which influenced the creation of said Committee: morale. The Committee on Food Habits was faced with ensuring American civilians would make the necessary food sacrifices while improving nutrition and preserving wartime morale. As will be seen, changing food habits, improving nutrition and dealing positively with food shortages were seen as key to the morale of American civilians during the Second World War.

Like many of the contexts for this classic study, according to Johnson and Nichols (1998), "civilian morale research and the ideas that drove it have largely been forgotten in the 50 years since the war ended" (p. 71). However, Herman (1995) noted that "morale was a unifying theme among psychological experts" (p. 48) during the war. Therefore, it is important to note morale's impact on psychology when re-examining this time period.

The need for morale during World War II arose because of the intergroup tensions which existed within the country at the time. An understanding of these tensions is necessary in the re-evaluation of Lewin's (1942a) classic work because it was the desire to resolve these problems and create unity, which influenced the production of the Committee's wartime works. The interest in morale by psychologists was spurred by the government's belief that the war would not be won by conventional warfare alone and that psychological warfare also needed to be employed (Collier et al., 1991). Psychologists and other social scientists were called on to find ways to boost morale in both the troops

overseas and the civilians at home because the government was aware that without strong morale the American people would be unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices needed to ensure victory.

To understand why morale was of great interest to social scientists during the war, some of the social problems related to diversity which had been part of American society since the 1700s need to be explored. The immigrants of the late 1700s and earlier 1800s felt they could create a new nation, free of the persecutions they had escaped from in the British Isles and Western Europe, a world where acceptance and equality for all became the “American dream.” Assimilation was seen not only as the ideal, but it was believed to be occurring as demonstrated in the following piece which appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1782:

[He] . . . whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced . . . Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men. (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, p. 288).

This optimism that assimilation could be achieved continued into the early 1900s where the ideal of blending the many subcultures into one group was immortalized in Israel Zangwill’s 1908 play *The Melting Pot*. This play presented Zangwill’s belief that assimilation could be achieved (Deaux, 2003), even in such a racially divided nation as the United States. However, the play did not argue that assimilation was natural or easy;

rather it suggested assimilation needed both to be worked for and to be subjected to the “control and supervision” (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, p. 293) of the government.

In reality, the government attempted to assert control over the population to prevent the need for assimilation by excluding many minority groups from the country. They limited so called assimilation to those of Anglo-Saxon descent (Glazer, & Moynihan, 1963). It has been argued that one of the main reasons that those of colour were not assimilated was to improve and maintain the economic status of whites. By viewing those of colour as belonging outside society because they were seen as inferior and unchangeable, white Americans were able to control the power and wealth in society (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963).

Those of Anglo-Saxon descent maintained control of society particularly though the 1800s because there were clear beliefs, ostensibly supported by science, about biologically based racial differences which put those of Anglo-Saxon descent at the top of the racial hierarchy. These ideas were supported by many prominent theorists and scholars. For example, while there was little evidence that Charles Darwin advocated the superiority of the white human in his origin of species theory, many groups, including Evangelical Protestants, used the notion of evolution to assert their elevated place in society (Collier et al., 1991). The Evangelical Protestants believed they had a special relationship with God who had chosen them to improve the United States. They used Darwin’s notions of evolution and survival of the strongest species to support their belief in the idea that God had a special plan for them. They saw God as having chosen to elevate their biologically superior place in society, while “inferior” races, such as Natives

and Blacks, would eventually die out (Collier et al., 1991; Herman, 1995).

Sir Frances Galton, Darwin's cousin, produced theories which more directly supported the notion of biological differences within the human race. Galton traveled extensively in Africa and collected measurements and samples which he believed supported Western European superiority (Collier et al., 1991; Fancher, 2004; Samelson, 1978). Galton's findings led him to conclude that observable differences in characteristics between groups were due to inborn racial differences. By 1911, Galton's notion of eugenics, a theory that asserted the preservation of humankind by encouraging those deemed as most desirable to reproduce, had become popular in the United States. Colleges and universities began to teach classes on eugenics as a growing number of Americans believed eugenics could present a biological solution to social problems (Fancher, 2004). In a survey of general American magazines in 1914, it was found that there were more articles on eugenics than on slums, tenements and living standards combined (Collier et al., 1991).

It has been charged that one of the reasons for the success of the eugenics movement within the United States in the early 1900s was the rise in immigration and the change in the origins of the immigrants (Higham, 1969; Samelson, 1978). The industrial revolution of the United States began to attract Southern and Eastern European immigrants. These new immigrants were seen as inferior to the more established immigrants from Northern Europe and intelligence data collected at entry points such as Ellis Island supported these beliefs. Therefore, Americans endeavored to keep the United States "racially pure" (Collier et al., 1991, pp. 27-28) by restricting immigration. A

restriction of immigration was seen as a way of preventing contamination of the bloodlines and precluding the need for stricter eugenics sterilization programs in the future (Collier et al., 1991). It was even suggested that without methods of racial control, such as eugenics and restrictive immigration, American democracy would be destroyed (Higham, 1969; Samelson, 1978).

Racially restrictive policies on immigration began in the late 1800s with the Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1884, which were the first acts to name a specific racial group as undesirable in the United States (Deaux, 2003). The Quota Law of 1921 was even more limiting to those immigrating from Eastern Europe and Asia as it established immigration quotas. The quotas were based on 1910 population figures, and stated that each country's immigration was to be limited to 3% of the total number of people who had immigrated to the United States from each country prior to 1910. This was followed by the increasingly restrictive Immigration Act of 1924 which dropped the quotas to 2% and shifted the base year from 1910 to 1890 (Deaux, 2003). This limitation allowed mass immigration of those from Western European countries such as Germany, Ireland and England-Wales (each group had more than a million immigrants in the year 1890), while extremely limiting immigration from Eastern and Southern European countries such as Italy, Russia, and Poland, whose mass immigration to the United States began in the early 20th century (Collier et al., 1991; Deaux, 2003). These limitations were established to keep the majority of American citizens white and predominately Protestant and to prevent racial contamination. Further, those from the restricted country who had immigrated to the United States, often faced racism and prejudice by the more established

Western European countries. This prevented the American dream of tolerance and absence of persecution from truly being realized, as the laws limited the racial make up of the country.

It must be noted that not all American social scientists supported eugenics, immigration restrictions or other racialized views. Their substantial opposition had an enormous impact on the changing vocabulary of anthropology and psychology. Those social scientists who rejected notions of racial differences amended the language as they began to explore notions of national character and culture. One of the primary contributors to this change was Franz Boas, who had immigrated to the United States from Germany in the 1880s. The work Boas conducted in the early 1900s went against the prevailing racialized attitudes as he attempted to use scientific knowledge to disprove racial stereotypes and fight for equal treatment of all groups (Roth Pierpont, 2004). He and his students measured skulls to dismiss the beliefs that there were biological differences in intelligence and ability. Boas also wrote papers which contested the findings of those supporting eugenics and immigration restrictions and he fought to protect Jews from Hitler's racial purity doctrines (Roth Pierpont, 2004). His work was a pioneering effort to take anthropology from a discipline designed to keep minorities in their place through an exploitation of the concept of race, to a science designed to explore culture (Roth Pierpont, 2004).

It was because of his extensive work that Boas has been credited with placing anthropological interest in the development and behaviours of individuals within a cultural framework (Williams, 1975). Boas argued that the observed differences in individuals

were not determined by biology. Rather, culture accounted for most aspects of personality. To Boas “the community of emotional life that rises from our everyday habits - was more significant than race or origin in building a nation” (Roth Pierpont, 2004, p. 61). Cultural habits were the key factor in determining the outcome of both national and individual development. Therefore, according to Boas, people must be looked at not only as individuals, but also as individuals within their given cultural traditions (Roth Pierson, 2004).

In the early 1900s Boas was one of the few to challenge prevalent racialized ideas, but challenges to the notion of white supremacy began in earnest in the 1920s (Samelson, 1978). By this time Boas’ students had transmitted his ideas to almost every major university in the United States. There was a growing acceptance of Boas’ findings that personality was not racially determined but that it was defined by culture (Collier et al. 1991). Several of his students, who were involved with the Committee on Food Habits, exemplify this shift in understanding. For example, Ruth Benedict’s (1934) *Patterns of Culture* attempted to show how different cultures formed distinct patterns. According to Benedict, these patterns influenced the attitudes and moods of the entire population that belonged to a given culture (Ingham, 1996). In 1934, Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish’s work *The Races of Mankind* was one of the first scientific attempts to disprove the existence of biologically determined differences and to argue that observed differences were culturally determined. In another example, Mead’s (1928) *Coming of Age in Samoa*, argued that puberty was a more pleasant experience for young women in Samoa than in the United States, not because of biological differences, but because of cultural ones

(Collier et al., 1991). This anthropological understanding of culture, which was transmitted from Boas to Mead, strongly influenced the work conducted by the Committee on Food Habits, as will be shown in the following chapters.

While social scientists were beginning to explore culture and disprove old racial ideals, racial intolerance remained a problem in the United States. The government, through the use of social sciences, needed to find ways to overcome such divides for the war effort. As will be shown in the following chapters, as a government agency, much of the Committee on Food Habits' efforts were aimed at increasing unity through an understanding of culture. Unity was seen essential to morale. Psychologists and other social scientists addressed issues of unity in order to increase morale which they believed would help assure an American war victory.

The most comprehensive understanding of wartime morale in psychology was published in 1942 by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) as *Civilian Morale: Second Yearbook for the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues*. This work defined morale, explored its place in democracy, provided information on how to develop morale, and examined the state of morale in the United States. It also showed the importance of increasing morale in children and students, as well as placing an emphasis on increasing morale in the workplace. It is interesting to note that *Civilian Morale* considered not only the morale of the nation as a whole, but much emphasis was placed on creating morale within minority groups. The authors were aware of the racial and cultural tensions which existed on the home front and which needed to be overcome if victory was to be achieved.

Gordon Allport's (1942) chapter in *Civilian Morale* provides the most concise definition of morale. He wrote:

By high national morale we mean (a) the healthful state of the convictions and values in the individual citizen that endows him with abundant energy and confidence in facing the future; (b) his decisive, self-disciplined effort to achieve specific objectives that derive from his personal convictions and values; and (c) the agreement among citizens (especially in times of crisis) in respect to their convictions and values and the coordination of their efforts in attaining necessary objectives. (Allport, 1942, p. 5).

Upon evaluating this understanding of morale, one can see how this definition, particularly item c, the need to have civilians coordinate their efforts, was reflected in the Committee on Food Habits' work. Their goal was to have each citizen coordinate their efforts to create, preserve and better utilize available food sources (Guthe & Mead, 1943), which in turn would increase morale.

Building and maintaining morale were high priorities for the Committee because they were aware that good health and pleasure through food "are the primary considerations for the maintenance of morale and spirits" (Metraux, 1942, p. 6). Also, it was noted by the Committee that food had an emotional place in people's lives: "Food is a means by which expressions of friendship and love are made" (Woodward, 1943a, p. 1). Food was also seen as an important "cultural symbol" (Nizzardini & Joffe, n.d., p. 2). The Committee believed that the removal of many foods or other drastic changes in citizens' diets would cause great distress and lower morale. The importance of morale in the works

of the Committee on Food Habits will be illustrated in the following examples.

In one study done by the Committee on Food Habits (1942a), *A Report on the Morale Building Value of Specific Foods in the American Diet*, the Committee asked Americans “What is the morale building value of specific foods in the American diet?” Their goal was to determine, by region and across the country as a whole, which foods were deemed as essential and nonessential to the civilian population. The Committee determined there was a long list of essential food, food the American citizens could not imagine life without, including coffee, tea, bread, oil, margarine/butter, eggs, fruit, milk, pleasure foods (candy, ice cream, alcohol), and vegetables. They also found that Americans considered beans, cheese and fish to be of intermediate value. Very few foods were deemed to be less essential. Cookies, cakes, fruit, lettuce and salad dressing constitute the entire nonessential list. These were the foods that citizens felt they could easily sacrifice.

Also in this study, it was determined that it was not the availability of specific foods which affected morale: “The problem of morale centers not in the presence or absence of specific foods, but in the type of social situation within which these foods are present or absent” (Committee on Food Habits 1942a, p. 4). Traditional foods and those associated with celebrations had the highest morale value as they were seen as essential to the celebrations (Woodward, 1943a). In another study, it was suggested that the traditional method of preparation held the highest morale (Joffe, 1942). Food’s morale value seemed to be related to the traditions of the culture of the group, and removal of such traditions would likely negatively impact morale.

In another study, *Preliminary Report on the Psychological Aspects of the Relative Essentiality of Uses of Sugar* (Committee on Food Habits, 1943a), the Committee on Food Habits asserted that sugar was a condiment of high value. It deserved special attention, as it was associated with pleasure foods, such as candy, ice cream, soft drinks and alcohol. It was believed that sugar's disappearance would "impair morale" (Committee on Food Habits, 1943a, p.1). The Committee concluded that sugar should be rationed because they feared over consumption of it would occur. As sugar was seen as key to morale, the Committee suggested ways to reduce sugar without harming morale, such as removing it from products such as cereal while leaving it in a purer form so it could be added to food. They also suggested that sugar could be used to increase the palatability of some unrationed foods. If handled correctly, the Committee believed that sugar consumption could be decreased without impacting morale.

Oil was another food that was seen as having important status in the American diet, and was explored in a report, *A Preliminary Report on the Psychological Aspects of the Relative Importance of the Uses of Edible Fats and Oils* (Committee on Food Habits, 1943b). Like sugar, it was believed that rationing should occur in edible fat products such as butter because "the psychological value of fats and the importance of morale need to be considered" (Committee on Food Habits, 1943b, p. 1). The disappearance of butter, in particular, was seen not only as a threat to civilian morale, it was feared that without butter and other oils, consumption of breads and salads would decrease. Cooking fats were seen as particularly essential to the morale and mental well-being of wartime factory workers whose primary cooking method was frying. The

Committee felt that the workers who were already living in unfavourable conditions would suffer psychologically if cooking fats did not remain available. Like sugar, oil and butter needed to remain in the American civilian diet if morale was to be maintained.

Another food which was associated with higher levels of morale was milk. In *The Role of Milk in American Culture* (Committee on Food Habits, n.d.) the Committee concluded that most Americans could not imagine life without milk, particularly for their children and the sick and elderly. Milk's role was more complicated than sugar or fat because milk was the subject of many superstitious beliefs and believed by many to have "magical and quasi medical value" (Committee on Food Habits, n.d., p. 2). Therefore, if milk needed to be restricted, the Committee believed that targeting children's fears about the loss of milk through school programs would reduce anxiety and help protect morale.

While the Committee on Food Habits saw the morale value of many of the foods in the American diet, they were aware that restrictions were unavoidable in the war. This led to the creation of *A Report on Recommended Education Practices in the Light of the Food Situation as of April 1945* (Committee on Food Habits, 1945a). The Committee found that morale was highest in those who had the greatest understanding of food production, who planted successful victory gardens and canned, and knew how to substitute foods effectively. People with high morale were also aware of the importance of nutrition, had relatives in the armed services, had knowledge of worse conditions in the last war, and believed that cooperative food behaviours would shorten the war.

To increase and maintain morale, this report suggested educational programs which stressed many of the factors associated with high food related morale, such as the

importance of individual and community efforts through victory gardens, canning and conservation. The Committee on Food Habits believed that issues of food had to be addressed at the local level, not the national or international level. By addressing the issue of food habits at an individual level it was believed that the most change would occur. It had been demonstrated in the SPSSI Yearbook *Civilian Morale* (1942), that one of the most successful methods of increasing morale was giving each individual things they could do to help in the war effort. By educating civilians on canning, gardening and rationing the Committee could “enlist individual efforts and increase the sense that there is something they can do” (Committee on Food Habits, 1945a, p. 6). This would “make people feel that there is equal sacrifice” (Committee on Food Habits, 1945a, p. 6) within each region and across the country, and further help to maintain wartime morale.

The above-mentioned works on morale appear to have been looking for generalizations of American food habits. However, some works were also charged with increasing morale in specific cultures within the United States. For example, *Italian Food Patterns and their Relationship to Wartime Problems of Food and Nutrition* by Nizzardini and Joffe (n.d.) looked specifically at Italian food patterns and the issues surrounding them. They noted that when dealing with food, researchers and educators had to handle this population carefully because Italians were “sensitive about what they eat and must be educated carefully” (Nizzardini & Joffe, n.d., p. 2). It was feared by the researchers that Italian Americans could be easily alienated by some methods aimed at changing their eating habits, which may have resulted in a decrease in morale in this group.

Lewin’s previously discussed works also illustrate the importance of morale,

although it is not as clear as in many of the other works produced for the Committee on Food Habits. For example, Willerman (1942) found that when given a choice about changing habits “the members of the group decision co-ops showed more favorable attitudes to the proposition as a whole and were more eager to succeed” (Willerman, 1942, p. 5-6). It can be concluded that individuals who were happy, or who possessed more favourable attitudes toward sacrifice and habit change, would possess higher morale than those who were unhappy. This conclusion can be made with fair certainty given the other research on morale done by the Committee and other agencies during the war as this body of work has shown that individuals who view sacrifice positively had better morale. Therefore, I believe that Willerman’s study indirectly found that when people were asked to come to a group consensus about food habits, and were in agreement with the decisions, they were likely to have higher morale.

Lewin’s classic work was a follow-up to this and it was unlikely that this finding escaped Lewin’s notice. While he may not have officially commented on it, his classic work, *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942a), also implied that when given a choice, women would make a difficult decision which they were happier about, and which would improve their morale. Unfortunately, the surviving archival record does not contain discussions on morale by Lewin or the Committee. From a close reading of the surviving material, it is clear that the need for morale was partially responsible for the formation of the Committee on Food Habits and was one of the main themes addressed by this Committee. Lewin would have been aware of this, as he was in contact with Mead and others, and was likely

influenced by the discussions the Committee had regarding morale and the numerous studies which explored it, even if his works for the Committee do not clearly express this influence. So while morale is not an explicit theme in Lewin's (1942a) classic study, the need for it during the war did impact on its creation, and therefore in a re-examination of this work, an understanding of morale is essential.

Chapter Four

Culture and the Committee

Imbedded in many of the studies of morale conducted by the Committee on Food Habits is the notion of culture. Like morale, culture is also absent in most histories of social psychology. However, as it is an integral aspect of the Committee on Food Habits and Lewin's works, its place within the history of social psychology needs to be re-examined.

Culture may be absent from the annals of history because, as noted by Collier et al. (1991), the focus of social psychology has been primarily on the individual without the cultural context. Even though there are periods of time in the history of psychology in which groups were important to the field, such as during the war, experimental psychology has been the dominant method of exploration. This focused researchers on the individual's immediate reaction to a social situation, rather than the cultural background influencing the individual (Collier et al., 1991). Further, it has been suggested that cultural work failed in the United States because the country was fighting for unity and did not want some groups to be seen as different or deviant which may have further divided the nation. The country desperately needed to be united during and following the war (Seeley, 2003). Therefore, for a variety of reasons, culture has not only been neglected in the history of social psychology, but also has played a very limited role in the field as an area of study.

However, in the re-examination of this time period, it is clear that culture was relevant to the social scientific research of Lewin and the Committee on Food Habits. As

noted earlier, Boas, mentor to the Committee's executive secretary Margaret Mead, found that culture was the most important influence on individual development. This shifted the focus of many researchers away from race to culture. As will be shown, it is this shift to culture, and the need to understand cultures in order to increase the morale of a nation, that underlies much of the Committee's work and influenced the creation of Lewin's classic study.

One of the greatest weaknesses in research on culture at mid-century was the absence of definition. Seeley (2003) argued that the concept of culture at mid-century "lacked substance and depth" (p. 126). While the need for a common terminology in a collaboration between psychology and anthropology was suggested by Linton (1945), it did not emerge during the war. Even within the Committee on Food Habits' published and archival papers no discussion or definition of culture can be found. Therefore, to understand the concept of culture as used by Lewin and the Committee on Food Habits, a discussion of the term as it appeared in psychological and anthropological literature during the war is necessary.

Linton (1945) argued that all societies, no matter how basic, have culture which he defined as "the total way of life of any society not simply to those parts of this way which the society regards as higher or more desirable" (p. 30). Culture included all aspects of life from music to art to literature to food habits. This understanding of culture was echoed by Pandora (1997) as she noted the concept of culture was evolving at mid-century. At one time it designated "the high-water marks of a civilization (its singular Shakespeares and

Beethovens)” (Pandora, 1997, p. 64); however, in the 1940s it began to include all aspects of community life.

The notion of community life also appeared to be important to an understanding of culture. Klineberg (1940) wrote that culture was a “relatively well-defined system of folk-usages and customs effective throughout a community” (p. 484). Linton (1945) added that “a culture is the configuration of learned behaviors and results of behaviors whose component elements are shared and transmitted by members of a particular society” (p. 32). Linton (1945) contrasted culture, which was an organized group of behaviour patterns, with a society, a collection of individuals who have learned to work together. People in cultures shared patterns of behaviour which were not needed in society at large. Therefore, culture could be defined as groups with common behaviours. This idea was further stressed by Bidney (1949) who said that “culture is an attribute of human behavior and therefore is to be studied as an integral part of human behavior” (p. 32).

It seems clear that in the 1940s those few anthropologists and psychologists who were attempting to define culture saw it as all aspects of life, from art and science, to clothing and food, within a particular community or group of communities, which was demonstrated through individual and group behaviour. It is this sense of culture that has been applied to my interpretation of the Committee on Food Habits’ works explored in the following discussion. With this understanding of culture at mid-century, we can now turn to its presence in the Committee on Food Habits’ works.

Those on the Committee were keenly aware that food habits were culturally determined and much of their work addressed issues of culture. To begin with, the

Committee defined food habits as “the culturally standardized set of behaviours in regard to food manifested by individuals who have been reared within a given cultural tradition” (Guthe & Mead, 1943, p. 20). The emphasis for the Committee was that food habits were culturally determined, and to understand them, one had to understand the specific culture which supported them.

In a report presented to the Committee in 1942, Sweeny stated that the Committee recognizes that food habits could only be understood within the context of culture. They were bound by all aspects of life including “methods of production, distribution and consumption, caste and status classifications, infant care and educational procedures . . . as well as the material equipment of living, style of housing, furniture, kitchen utensils, heating, storage, refrigeration, etc.” (Sweeny, 1942, p. 1). Nizzardini & Joffe (n.d.) added, “a knowledge of foods eaten is not enough, for food habits are but part of the web of life of the group” (Nizzardini & Joffe, n.d., p. 2). According to Guthe (1945), “We cannot adequately study in detail the phenomena of one segment of the culture without giving proper consideration to the impact of these upon the phenomena of other segments of the culture” (p. 2). Food was but one important aspect of culture that needed to be explored by the researchers. For those involved with the Committee on Food Habits, food habits needed to be understood within the larger context of the cultures which supported them. This focused researchers on the subgroups or subcultures which made up the United States.

Interest in the subgroups within the United States was not a common phenomenon in the fields of anthropology and psychology at this time. It was noted by the Committee

on Food Habits that, in the past, researchers had avoided working with minority groups because it was difficult to generalize these findings to the greater population (Committee on Food Habits, 1941b). These minority groups were most likely to have nontraditional diets. However, in the context of wartime morale, the understanding of subcultures became as important as these broader generalizations. For each of the subgroups, food cultures had to be understood if food habits were to be changed.

There are several studies produced by the Committee on Food Habits which explore these culturally determined food habits of the various groups within the United States. For example, *A Report on the Morale Building Value of Specific Foods in the American Diet* (Committee on Food Habits, 1942a) noted that “Regional foods are of varying importance in different parts of the United States” (p. 12). To aid in the protection of morale, the Committee looked at ten cultural groups with distinct food habits, including those of Chinese, Greek and Syrian descent, in order to determine how foods should be restricted. In doing so they divided foods into three groups: condiments, specially valued staples and holiday dishes. They determined that condiments “which give food its distinctive character . . . should be considered in rationing” (Committee on Food Habits, 1942a, p. 12). However, foods in the other two groups should be controlled through the “regional distribution arrangements and holiday relaxations of rationing regulations” (Committee on Food Habits, 1942a, p. 12) as they were seen as particularly important for the maintenance of morale of a given culture. For example, the Committee concluded that soy sauce, bean sprouts and fresh ginger root were the preferred condiments of Chinese Americans and should be rationed. The specialty foods of this group were rice, water

chestnuts and teas, which should be subject to less control in order to maintain the morale of this cultural group.

Several other studies set out to explore the food habits of various cultures who resided in the United States. As noted earlier, Nizzardini and Joffe (n.d.) studied the eating habits of Italian Americans. They found that Italian food preferences included white bread, olive oil and fresh vegetables. To help this population deal with shortages and improve their diet they suggested encouraging Italians to eat darker breads, dress macaroni with ricotta, and hoped to teach them to mix olive oil with other more available oils. In another culturally specific study, African Americans food habits were explored. Joffe and Thompson Walker (n.d.) concluded that the diet of Blacks failed to meet nutritional standards due to the inferior social conditions they lived in. Therefore, to improve their diet, not only did cultural patterns need to be changed, but socio-economic factors needed to be addressed.

The Committee explored culture for several reasons. For example, besides food habits resulting from culture, early in the history of the Committee it was noted that:

Only one important psychological block to habit changes is known to the anthropologist; the case in which food habits, clothing fashions, linguistic habits, are symbols of group entity. In such case[s], the preservation of group entity is a matter of passionate loyalty in the community. (Committee on Food Habits, 1941c, p. 1)

Therefore, to change food habits, the psychological impact of the culture that fostered them needed to be explored. Without an understanding of the effect on culture, any method of habit change, even group decisions as noted by Lewin (1942a), would fail.

The need for cultural sensitivity was further demonstrated in a memo Mead received from Woodward (1943b). It had been found by LT. M. Pijoan with the Navy Medical Research Station, that the posters prepared for the nutritional campaigns were alienating Spanish-American populations. They were “widening the gulf between a group such as this and ‘America’” (Woodward, 1943b, p. 1). Further, the foods depicted in these posters, namely, red meat and green vegetables, had little meaning for Spanish-Americans. In fact, this depiction of food made this community believe that other groups had access to more food. Pijoan suggested that, to avoid such misunderstandings, different posters needed to be created for different cultural regions of the country. For example, in Spanish-American neighbourhoods, beans should be used as the centre of all campaigns because they represented the stable, inflexible food of this culture. Pijoan concluded that without culturally sensitive information, nutrition campaigns would fail as the posters “are worse than nothing with the group of people who really need nutrition education” (Woodward, 1943b, p. 1). Without cultural sensitivity, groups could be alienated from those providing nutritional education and could be prevented from obtaining this necessary information.

The Committee’s (1942a) desire to protect culture was illustrated through *A Report on the Morale Building Value of Specific Foods in the American Diet*. In this report the Committee made reference to the fact that children may have to be evacuated

with their teachers and not their parents. This recommendation was met with severe criticism from Flora Slocum (1942), Technical Consultant on Standards of Assistance, Social Security Board. One of the main criticisms of this plan posed by Slocum (1942) was that the separation of children and parents would result in a disruption of family and culture. In a draft response to Slocum, Mead (1942a) wrote:

So sensitive in fact, are the members of the Committee to the interdependence of the different aspects of culture, that they carefully consider the repercussions of the phrasing of nutrition education or the sanctions used by the nutrition programs, on the total culture and particularly upon the functioning of the American character in wartime. (p. 1).

Mead asserted that through scientific means the Committee on Food Habits worked tirelessly to understand and appreciate all the cultures of the United States. This claim is supported by the variety of work on culture done by the Committee as outlined in this chapter.

This statement from Mead (1942a) leads us to a tension that emerges in the Committee's work as she conversely noted the importance of culture and American national character. On the one hand, individual cultures were targeted for research, on the other, the Committee was attempting to transcend the various subcultures that existed within the United States to create a unified American character. Both culture and national character became important to the study of food habits in the war, because both were essential to the morale of the country. The Committee and Lewin had to work to balance these two distinctive and important ideas in the context of food, aspects of interest often

neglected from the history of the field. This will be addressed in the following chapter after an exploration into Lewin's work on culture.

As noted earlier, for Lewin, an exploration into food habits needed to combine a broader understanding of all the influences on the group which supported the habit, and needed to employ the approaches of a variety of social scientists, as was the trend at this time. The importance of culture was also illustrated in several of his works for the Committee as well as some of his work outside of it.

Outside of the Committee, the importance of understanding other groups and cultures was noted by Lewin in his presidential address at the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues' (SPSSI) annual meeting in 1942: "we will have to pay a frightful price for the lack of understanding foreign cultures and there seems to be little hope for a better world organization after the war unless we learn these facts" (Lewin, 1943a, p.116). He added that "If we want to establish a basis for permanent peace, we should be very clear that satisfying needs without changing culture will lead us nowhere" (Lewin, 1943a, p. 118). He believed that cultures would have to be changed if world peace was to be achieved. The cultures Lewin believed had to be changed, were the fascist ones, such as the one he escaped from in Germany. They needed to be replaced by what Lewin saw as the ideal type of culture, American democratic culture (Lewin, 1997).

In order to change culture, Lewin set out to understand how countries developed leadership styles. A collection of papers was published after his death entitled *Resolving Social Conflicts*. In these papers Lewin argued that group membership shaped one's behaviour, actions and feelings. This was illustrated by Lewin's study of American and

German cultures. He explored education to determine which factors accounted for the rise of Hitler and fascism in one country and democracy in the other. One goal of this work was to determine how education could be used to foster “cultural reconstruction” (Lewin, 1997, p. 25) in Germany and other nations which were dealing with un-democratic leaders. Lewin appeared optimistic that with outside help and proper education, totalitarian regimes or cultures could be replaced by democratic ones. Further, Lewin noted, “I became convinced that the American ideals are the best for human society” (Allport, 1947, p. 9). Lewin believed when cultures need to be changed for the protection of peace and democracy, they should be modeled after the United States.

Lewin’s interest in culture can also be seen in his work inside the Committee. However, even the Committee downplayed the importance of this work. Mead stated that “the psychologists have done the experiments in method of change based on a previous study of the culture” (Committee on Food Habits, 1947, p. 4). For her, the importance of Lewin’s work was not in the exploration of culture, as she felt this had been handled by the anthropologists. Rather, Lewin’s contribution to the Committee was establishing methods of changing these culturally determined habits, as done in his classic work *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942s). While the classic study which provided a method for changing cultures emerges as the most important contribution Lewin made to the Committee on Food Habits, in order to create a more complete history of this experiment, his clear interest in culture cannot be neglected.

For example in Leon Festinger's (1944) *Effect of Container on Food Preferences*, conducted under the direction of Lewin, the cultural impact of food habits clearly emerges. Due to wartime material shortages, Americans needed to become more familiar and accepting of different packaging. The study explored the preference of drinking containers in hospitals, homes, restaurants, soda fountains, and picnics. It was determined that overall, with the exception of picnics, individuals preferred and more often selected glass cups when given a choice between paper and glass. When asked the cause of these preferences, the researchers were given a variety of reasons, such as "It's customary; If everyone used paper I'd probably prefer it; I guess I'm used to drinking from a glass" (Festinger, 1944, p. 9), but when asked to drink from paper and glass again most participants said there was not a difference between the two containers. However, most maintained that they would still prefer glass.

These findings led Festinger (1944) to conclude that culture played an important role in food habits: "In studying a culture pattern from the standpoint of its potentialities for change, it will be necessary to know not only what the pattern is, but how strongly entrenched each particular usage may be in the habit systems of the members of that culture" (p. i). Culturally based habits appeared to be the reason for preferring glass to paper. These seemingly habitual patterns of behaviour may have been very weak because Festinger (1944) found that the rate of the response, "there is no difference" between glass and paper, was related to the amount of exposure people had to paper cups. The first time they drank from paper they were more likely to find it aversive. However, as they were exposed to paper, the gap between the preference of glass to paper decreased.

Festinger's (1944) study indicated that with exposure to new products, even products that go against the *status quo* of a given culture, such as paper cups in a society that prizes glass, cultural habits can be changed. This was another method of habit change that, while mentioned by other Committee members, is given less focus than Lewin's (1942a) group decision method. While there is no direct archival reason for this, it appears that Festinger's method of exposure may have been rejected by the Committee because it could violate the democratic principles the Committee was trying to preserve. Unlike a decision, exposure did not allow for informed democratic choices in decision-making; rather it implied imposing ideas on individuals because, when given free choice, individuals would not pick the less preferred item. However, the Committee and Lewin did not want to impose choice. This was seen as a violation of democratic choice. Rather than mere exposure to new products, they felt that education on the importance of change would result in people making informed, democratic choices which would benefit themselves and the war effort. Lewin and the Committee appeared optimistic that when provided with the appropriate nutritional information, groups of people would be willing to sacrifice some aspects of their cultural diets in order to eat a more standard American diet which would improve the health of the country and aid in the war effort.

It should be noted that while Lewin and the members of the Committee on Food Habits believed they were creating a democratic method of opinion change, not all critics have agreed with their assertions. Some have criticized Lewin for creating a subtle method of social change. However, many defenders have maintained that it is more accurate to

think that his methods of change represented democratic or participatory forms of social engineering.³

Culture also emerges as a key theme in Lewin's (1942b) *A Group Test for Determining the Anchorage Points of Food Habits*. Here, Lewin set out to create an instrument which could be used to assess the culturally based eating ideology or food habits of groups. This research applied a modified Bavelas test in order to study food related attitudes. In his proposal for this project, Lewin expressed the importance of getting people to change their eating habits because without such change nutritional programs would fail. He wrote "It would be easier to change the eating habits if more were known about the psychological forces which keep alive the specific eating habits of the individual at the various age levels and in the various socio-economic groups" (Lewin, 1942c, p.1). Lewin felt that an understanding of all the factors surrounding food, including culture, was essential. Without this understanding, the methods of opinion change which he had developed would not be effective.

A Group Test For Determining the Anchorage Points of Food Habits (Lewin, 1942b), differed from Lewin's previously discussed work, *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942a). It shifted focus from women to children. This shift occurred because, not only did

³For further discussion on Lewin and social engineering see: Graebner, W. (1986). The small group and democratic social engineering, 1900-1950. *Journal of Social Issues*, 42 (1), 137-154; Graebner, W. (1987). Confronting the democratic paradox: The ambivalent vision of Kurt Lewin. *Journal of Social Issues*, 43 (3), 141-146; Lewin, M. (1987). Kurt Lewin and the invisible bird on the flagpole: A reply to Graebner. *Journal of Social Issues*, 43 (3), 123-139.

children represent 35% of the population, but Lewin believed children's preferences had a strong impact on what their mothers purchased. Lewin (1942b) also believed that children would be far more willing to reveal facts about their food preferences which adults may consciously or unconsciously conceal.

The instrument, created by Lewin and Bavelas, could easily be used in the schools in any region of the country to help researchers get a better understanding of what cultural eating patterns existed in that area. The instrument was to be administered to classes or groups of children. The following are examples of questions found on the completed measure:

Jim and Bob stayed at a friend's house over the weekend. Monday morning they were talking about it on the way to school. Bob said: "I had a great time because the food was just swell; each meal was wonderful!" Jim said: "Oh, I had awful meals the food was terrible. It was no fun at all!" Name the foods served at the house Bob visited. Name the foods served at the house Jim visited. (Lewin, 1942b, p. 15). (Space was provided for the children to write which foods were served for breakfast, lunch and dinner).

What is a food which someone in a family like yours would eat and would be praised for eating? (Lewin, 1942b, p. 16). (Space is provided for the children to write which food, who would praise them and why they would be praised. A second question, identical in form to this one, asked which foods would they be scolded for eating).

The children were also asked for the size of their family, nationality of their parents, and

questions about parental occupation and home appliances, such as the existence of an ice box in the house, (Lewin, 1942b), illustrating Lewin's interest in nationality and economic status⁴. The researchers were provided with a key to score the various types of food reported by each child. The foods were placed into categories such as bread, cakes and pastries, candies and sweets, other desserts, eggs, fowl, fruit (general), fruit (citrus), and fruit (other). By studying the types of food being eaten in a region the researchers would be able to come to an understanding of the cultural variations of food habits in that area.

In another study, *Forces Behind Food Habits and Methods of Change*, Lewin (1943b) set out to investigate some aspects of why people ate what they ate, again with particular emphasis on cultural habits. This study explored the differences in eating habits of five groups: Upper, middle and lower class White Americans, Czechoslovakians and Blacks. The findings clearly illustrated the existence of cultural and class differences in eating habits. For example, the Czechoslovakians were found to be more self-sufficient than any other group, meaning they relied less on store bought food and did more baking, growing and canning. Meat was listed as the most preferred food by those of the higher income levels, while vegetables were preferred by the lower class and Blacks.

Lewin (1943b) concluded: "Obviously, the more divergent the responses to a given question, the more heterogeneous the culture since more leeway for individual preference is permitted. When a culture is exceedingly strong in its dictates individual differences will be minimized" (p. 43). Lewin noted that individual food preferences did emerge in studies

⁴Economic status emerges in several of the Committee's works. It is a weak theme that is often correlated with culture and cultural groups and is difficult to understand independently. For the purposes of this thesis it will not be examined independently.

of food habits. However, the food habits of the individual could not be understood without an assessment of the cultural influence on them because the group's preferences influenced the individual's habits, even if it was to a small degree.

The above mentioned studies clearly illustrate an interest in culture which is often neglected in historical accounts of Lewin's work. While the classic study, *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942a), does not explicitly address culture, it provides a method of changing cultures. Culture was important to the other works created by Lewin at this time. Further, without a cultural understanding of food habits, it appears that Lewin did not believe his democratic method of opinion change would be effective. Therefore, to use this method, the cultures of the groups being targeted for change had to be understood.

The need for understanding the complexities of food-related cultures was also seen in the theory on food habits which Lewin created for the Committee. Known for stressing the importance of the theoretical aspects of the science of psychology, Lewin created the channel theory of social influence. Here Lewin (1947) noted that "The theory of channels and gatekeepers helps to define more precisely how certain 'objective' sociological problems of locomotion of goods and persons intersect with 'subjective' psychological and cultural problems" (pp. 146-147). This theory may have been created out of the expressed wishes of the Committee. At the 1941 Conference with the Committee on Food Habits, Dr. Douglas Oliver suggested the creation of a "food habits map" (Committee on Food Habits, 1941a, p. 6) which would show how food was being produced and land used. Lewin's channel theory provided a map that did not begin in the

field, but rather in the store where consumers made their first decisions about food products.

This theory explored the role of housewives, as they were seen as the people who had the greatest influence on what was eaten by the family. Women acted as the “gatekeeper” (Lewin, 1947, p.145), the person responsible for determining which food was to be served to the family. The food the gatekeeper chose passed through one of two channels, the buying channel or the gardening channel. The women acted as sole gatekeeper for the buying channel, while the man of the house had more control over the gardening channel. However, since most food was purchased at the grocery store in the 1940s by housewives, Lewin (1947) felt that the buying channel was more important so his focus for this theory was on this channel.

While the actual foods that ended up on the table would differ by culture and region, the method of arrival to the home was the same for all housewives. The buying channel began at the grocery store with the products available to the housewives, followed the product home, to the ice box or pantry, through preparation and onto the table. Since most of the food that made it to the table was consumed by some member of the family, Lewin (1947) believed that to effectively change food habits the character of the food that was purchased must be changed. Women must make different choices while in the grocery store. To get them to make these choices Lewin (1942a) suggested educating them in small groups as demonstrated in his classic study. For this type of education to be successful, as noted earlier, the culture of the food habits had to be understood as well. Through the use of this theory, Lewin hoped to come to a greater understanding of the

complex nature of food habits which he saw as encompassing all aspects of cultural and group life.

The above mentioned works show the clear interest in culture that is often neglected, not only in a remembrance of Lewin's (1942a) classic work, but also in his works in general. Another often overlooked aspect of Lewin's work was his interest in prejudice. According to Samelson (1978) Lewin's contribution to the study of prejudice was in part responsible for the shift in studies from race to prejudice. While not explicitly important to his work for the Committee on Food Habits, a brief re-examination of it shows that Lewin was keenly aware of the movement in the social sciences from race to culture and prejudice.

Interest in prejudice became particularly important to psychologists with the onset of the war when "there existed hundreds of organizations dedicated to the promotion of racial tolerance and intergroup harmony" (Samelson, 1978, p. 273). Samelson (1978) noted that "instead of trying to determine the *objective* mental differences between nonwhite and white, as well as among the white races, psychologists became interested in the subjective side, the *attitudes* of the 'racial groups' toward each other" (p. 268). These new areas of study emerged at this time because of the need for unity, but also because of the belief that culture had a greater impact on shaping opinions and beliefs than biological race. This was clearly influenced by Boas' assertion that personality was culturally determined, not biologically determined. Therefore, instead of focussing on non-existing biologically determined mental differences, researchers were free to look at culturally determined attitudes.

Lewin's interest in racism and prejudice has been attributed to his democratic feelings as well as his experience with Nazi Germany. He believed the survival of minorities, particularly Jewish people, "depended upon an honest understanding of their own group life as a foundation for personal happiness as well as for satisfactory relations with other groups in the world over" (Marrow, 1948, p. 31). To help foster this understanding of each group, Lewin wrote numerous articles that tackled anti-Semitism and anti-black prejudice. He was also involved with the Commission on Community Interrelations (CCI) (Loye, 1971). Through his work with CCI, he hoped to engage in action research which would help overcome the prejudices of American society. He hoped to meet this goal by finding common interests between the various cultural groups (Marrow, 1969). In one project for CCI dealing with housing, Lewin found that "group cohesiveness and morale were distinctly higher in the integrated setting" (Loye, 1971, p. 74), which supported his belief that if people could be united, morale could be improved (Marrow, 1969). Here Lewin explicitly states the importance of unity in the development of morale. One can assume that the importance of morale, while not as clear in his classic work (Lewin, 1942a), does underlie the collection of works he produced for the Committee on Food Habits.

Although his work for the Committee did not clearly address prejudice or the shift in vocabulary from race to culture, it is clear that Lewin was influenced by these concepts. In the context of the Committee, Lewin looked for ways to find group solidarity through the understanding of cultural food habits and the creation of a standardized American diet. Lewin believed that opinion change could be used to alter cultural habits, which was a

departure from the belief that racial differences were unchangeable and could only be dealt with by eliminating the race. Further, Lewin believed that an exploration into these groups, and the modification of food related opinions and behaviours, could be used to unify the country which would in turn strengthen morale. With a broader understanding of Lewin's (1942a) work in the context of morale and culture, attention can now be focused on the disciplinary interests of national character which also impacted this classic study.

Chapter Five

National Character: The dichotomy of unity and diversity

While culture began to replace race in much of the social scientific literature, the need to unite the various groups within the United States became a pressing matter at the beginning of the Second World War due to the government's desire for a quick and victorious outcome to the conflict. As demonstrated, the dream of assimilation within the United States was never achieved. The country contained diverse subgroups who were often in conflict with one another. This discord within society had to be overcome so that the independent groups who called the United States their home would work together. The need to unite Americans further supported the shift in interest from the individual to the group, as demonstrated earlier in the discussion of Lewin's works. It was concluded that finding a common American national character, which all groups could share, was integral to the war's success (Higham, 1981). Not only was an understanding of national character seen as necessary to win the war, but it was also optimistically seen as a way of reshaping a peaceful world once the war concluded (Mead, 1951).

It is in this context that anthropologists shifted their work on culture and personality from the dominant exploration of foreign populations to an attempt to understand the culture of the United States. Prior to World War II there was very little cultural exploration being done with American populations (Klineberg, 1940), except for a few studies of Native Americans and the Lynds' (1929) *Middletown*. The war period allowed for a movement from studies of foreign culture to an exploration into all groups who inhabited the United States in an effort to understand civilians and increase morale.

Benedict (1946) asserted the importance of understanding American and European countries in order to create a peaceful post-war world:

We need studies of Western peoples which show them to us as a people who have learned, in specific ways, to solve the universal human problems by special cultural arrangements to which they give their allegiance as we do to ours. We need intimate understanding of their experiences, so that we shall learn to discriminate between what is truly socially dangerous and what is only another method of arriving at a socially desirable goal . . . If we, the people of the world, are ever to achieve a world organization which promises mutual benefits, we must be scientifically prepared to know the strength which different nations of the world can utilize to this end. (p. 279)

Benedict's desire to look at Western cultures, which included North America and Western Europe, was in contrast to traditional anthropologist works which focused primarily on the inhabitants of the Islands of the South Pacific. It is this shift from an interest in foreign populations to an interest in Americans which led the Committee on Food Habits to explore national character through food habits.

While the concept of national character emerges at mid-century, it is unclear at what point the importance of the concept was taken up by social scientists. Several scholars asserted that the concept of character had existed since humans first came in contact with those outside their immediate spheres. Gorer (1950) asserted that "viewed from one aspect the concept of national character is as old as history, and probably as old as human society" (p. 105). In the 20th century it has been suggested that the scientific

study of American national character occurred in 1934 with the publication of Ruth Benedict's work *Patterns of Culture* (Gorer, 1950; Inkeles & Levinson, 1954). Mead (1951) acknowledged the onset of World War II as being responsible for "this special scientific development" (p. 70) of national character.

While the date may be contested by some, it is clear from the literature that national character was a popular subject in the discourse of the social sciences at mid-century, although a reading of most histories of social psychology would not indicate this. It was at this time that several in-depth studies of American character developed. One example of American national character emerged in Mead's (1942b) *And Keep Your Powder Dry*. This work was written shortly after the United States' entry into the war and it provided an example of wartime beliefs about national character. Through an exploration of national character, Mead hoped to bolster American morale (Herman, 1995). Mead wrote that this work arose out of the immediate problems of the war, and she felt that anthropological insights about American culture would aid in American victory. Her goal was to look at how one became American, primarily by comparing Americans to other cultures. She believed cultures could only be understood by contrasting them with other cultures.

She began her work with an attempt to dispel many of the racial myths by writing "we are our culture" (Mead, 1942b, p. 21). This emphasized the shift from race to culture which had occurred in the preceding decade. This statement clearly illustrates the influence of Boas' findings on Mead's works, and further suggests that this influence penetrated all her work, including that conducted for the Committee on Food Habits.

As Mead (1942b) was interested in how people became American, a section of *And Keep Your Powder Dry* examined children's development and family structure within the United States. She noted that unlike many other countries of the world, American families were not as reliant on extended family. The most important factor behind character and cultural development was the parent, "Americans are what they are because they have been reared in America by parents with certain ways of behaving" (Mead, 1942b, pp. 120-121). American culture was maintained because parents transmitted their habits, beliefs, and attitudes to their children.

Mead's (1942b) summary of American national character claimed that Americans were geared for success but were unable to handle failure. They were ready to fight, but only when provoked. Success and failure in the United States were based on a comparison to one's nearest contemporary. Americans cared little about the past as they were forward looking. They were ambivalent toward other cultures. Mead stated that with hard work the best of the American character would arise, and after a successful outcome to the war, Americans would help others rebuild the world in the image of the United States.

And Keep Your Powder Dry (Mead, 1942b) reflected the emerging discourse in anthropology and psychology at mid-century. Her work, while suggesting what individuals could do for the war effort, primarily focused on Americans as a cohesive group, bare of all culture except their understanding of a united American national character. Mead was very optimistic that the racial barriers which were just beginning to be challenged by social scientists could be overcome and a united America would emerge. Reviews of this work provided mixed support for Mead's findings. For example, Orville Prescott (1942) of the

New York Times stated that Mead was writing about an unrealistic utopia. Klineberg (1944) believed Mead's hypothesis could not be applied to the entire American population. Both were concerned with the lack of data and scientific support for Mead's theories. However, even given the limitations of this study, Prescott (1942) concluded that "most of the book, the part which deals with American character, is excellent, interesting and even important," (p. 23), while Klineberg (1944) added "*And Keep Your Powder Dry* is an interesting and valuable book" (p. 277). Even with its weaknesses, national character was seen as an essential concept in the war period.

Other explorations into national character arose in the postwar period. The early 1950s saw the publication of social psychologist David Riesman's (1950) *The Lonely Crowd* and historian David Potter's (1954) *People of Plenty*. These works attempted to create a postwar understanding of American national character. It was also at this time that one of the first essays to explore American character, F. J. Turner's 1893 essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, was extensively re-examined by historians. While these examples of national character will not be examined at length in this thesis, their existence is significant for several reasons. First, they show the interest in national character as a concept in the American social sciences at mid-century. Second, these four studies which examine American character, all fail to define the concept. More importantly, they fail to come to a common understanding of what constituted American national character at mid-century.

The lack of concrete understanding of national character may be due to the complexities of the concept. Borrowing from Jacques Barzun, Klineberg (1944) suggested

that “of all the books that no one can write, those about national character are the most impossible” (p. 273). One of the reasons national character was not defined clearly during the war was because the enormity of encapsulating all aspects of culture into a cohesive definition could not be completed while waging a war (Benedict, 1946; Mead, 1951). Therefore, American researchers studying national character, both abroad and at home, focused on aspects of character which were most relevant to the success of the war. As Mead (1951) noted “The countries studied and the particular problems studied were all functions of the course of the war” (p.75). For example, when studying Japan’s national character, American researchers targeted areas which were concerned with surrender. When dealing with German character, Americans focused on occupation and postwar reconstruction of a country whose people were subjected to attempts to alter their national character by the Nazis. Mead (1951) further stated that “In studies of the United States, attention was focused upon behavior in relation to government regulation of food” (p. 76). Mead further noted that morale was another issue of American character studied by social scientists during the war. The desire to study the food and morale aspects of American national character was clearly supported by the Committee’s works, as will be shown momentarily.

Besides encompassing all aspects of culture, an understanding of national character may have been complicated by the complexities of human behaviour and human relationships. Klineberg (1944) and Bateson (1942) both acknowledged that the concept of national character was too difficult to define because nations were not homogeneous. Countries were often made up of several distinct cultures which created heterogeneous

populations that could not be easily generalized into a singular group. Benedict (1946) also acknowledged the difficulties of studying nations with diverse cultural origins such as the United States. However, she asserted that these difficulties could be overcome: “the solution is to multiply the number of investigations to any desired point, and this holds true . . . [for] the United States” (Benedict, 1946, pp. 276-277). By examining each of the groups which resided in the United States, a clear picture of culture and character could emerge. Many social scientists were optimistic that with the use of the earlier noted multi-disciplinary collaborations and by using “whatever techniques the social sciences could offer” (Benedict, 1946, p. 274) a scientific study of character would emerge.

Due to the complexities of the concept it was argued that national character did not exist. In his work *The Illusion of National Character* Fyfe (1946) wrote “no nation can show a consistent line of action, none have national character . . . All nations, in circumstances more or less alike, behave the same way” (pp. 6-7). He argued that what scholars viewed as national character was not culture. Rather, it was the reflection and construction of the behaviours and attitudes of the society’s current leaders. While these arguments are compelling, for the purposes of this thesis they will be disregarded, because Mead and the Committee on Food Habits believed that national character existed. Therefore, this thesis will acknowledge national character as a relevant concept at mid-century in the discourse of psychologists and anthropologists.

As noted, the complexities of national character prevented the development of a concise understanding of the term. Few scholars even attempted to define it (Inkles & Levinson 1954). The clearest definition which arises at this time was from Ginsberg

(1942) which states that national character “indicates differences in the distribution of certain traits or perhaps of types in different groups” (p. 188) as well as representing the behaviour patterns of an entire group. Benedict (1946) believed that the anthropological understanding of national character which arose at this time could be defined as the study of “learned cultural behaviour” (p. 274).

Like culture, the need to develop national character is never directly expressed in the Committee’s papers. It is only with a closer reading and re-interpretation of the Committee’s work, in light of an understanding of the importance of creating a united country during the war, that it emerges.

In the previous chapter it was noted that within the Committee on Food Habits’ work, there was a dichotomy between the need for cultural understanding, and the need for national character. The split between unification and cultural diversity was illustrated in a report dealing with the potential of mass emergency feeding situations. The Committee wanted to establish places for eating that “maintain the atmosphere of a railway station or some other public place where the fears associated with unaccustomed social intercourse are at a minimum” (Committee on Food Habits, 1942b, p. 5), in situations where inter-cultural strains were likely to lower morale. Otherwise they wished that “every effort should also be made to use shared food situations as a way of increasing group solidarity between groups who have not been accustomed to feeling such solidarity” (Committee on Food Habits, 1942b, p. 5). As long as the creation of a unified American diet or the Americanization of food habits did not negatively impact morale, the Committee wished to create unified food habits. It appears they believed that food could be used to foster

friendly relations between the separate groups who lived in the United States and possibly help create a unified national character which would also increase morale.

This desire for the Americanization of diet was best depicted in the Committee's (1942b) report, *The Relationship Between Food Habits and Problems of Wartime Emergency Feeding*. The Committee (1942b) suggested that when dealing with mass feeding there had to be an attempt to provide for cultural differences through democratic choice:

Ideally a few reception centers should be set up which would be designated for those national and religious groups who wished to continue to practice food habits radically different from the ordinary American style. All individuals should, however, be free to choose between such culturally distinct centers and taking their chances with the rest of the American population. (p. 2)

This statement shows that while the Committee was willing to provide for those who did not comply with the American diet, there would be social consequences for their failure to assimilate. The Committee had concluded earlier that immigrants' food habits were coming in line with American diet because "immigrant groups regard themselves as inferior insofar as they differ from American folkways . . . The lunches that Mexican, Japanese and Filipino children usually bring to school in California schools are sandwich lunches; otherwise they would feel shamed" (Committee on Food Habits, 1941b). The Committee believed this type of food assimilation was occurring naturally in many parts of the country because immigrants wanted to belong to American society and they seemed to believe that their efforts could help speed up this process. This Americanization of food

habits or an American national food character was not likely the byproduct of racialized ideas, but rather, likely developed accidentally as the Committee on Food Habits attempted to unite the country and increase morale.

Also, their intent in the above assertion appears to have been to limit their aid to those with different food practices. The use of a “few” places that provide culturally sensitive meals implies that the vast majority of their efforts should go to those who had American food habits. It appears the Committee on Food Habits wanted their time and resources to go toward promoting an “American” diet which would perhaps build an American national character through food. However, the desire to protect democracy forbade them from removing individual choice. While trying to balance both culture and national character in order to increase wartime morale, the Committee clearly favoured the creation of a standardized American diet which reflected the American national character.

National character does not emerge explicitly as a theme addressed by Lewin. By reading his works in the context of the Committee on Food Habits, the relationship to this concept begins to appear. What was clear from the works was that Lewin was attempting to understand the cultural aspects of food habits. This was demonstrated in the creation of the Bavelas’ test to assess cultural and regional variations in *A Group Test For Determining the Anchorage Points of Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942b), and his exploration into the eating habits of various cultural groups in *Forces Behind Food Habits and Methods of Change* (Lewin, 1943b). The importance of culture in changing food habits was further addressed by Festinger’s (1944) work on container preference. Festinger found that these types of preferences were culturally determined. Lewin (1942a) wished to

alter these culturally determined food habits through the method of opinion change discussed in his classic work, *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942a), in order to create a standardized food culture which met the nutritional needs of the American people. Through my reading of the surviving texts, I believe that through his exploration into culture, Lewin was really looking for ways to create a unified American food national character. As mentioned earlier, Lewin believed that the United States was the ideal country. Having escaped Nazi Germany, and owing his life to Americans (Marrow, 1969), he set out to preserve and spread American ideals. For Lewin, an American national character existed and needed to be explored. Therefore, his classic work needs to be understood as a study which was looking to create an Americanized diet. This creation of a standardized diet would further contribute to the creation of an American national character.

The greatest weakness of the work being done by social scientists on national character at mid-century is that they failed to define the term. While researchers stressed the importance of understanding national character due to the growing racial tensions among American civilians, they never clearly defined or explored the concept. This makes it difficult for historians to understand the term in the context of this period. However, even with its limitations, it appears that because of the war and the need for morale, psychologists and anthropologists were attempting to define a unified national character, as it was believed that a united America would be successful in the war.

Through a re-examination of Lewin's classic study it is apparent that traditional

histories which focus only on the experimental findings, neglect important influences.

Lewin and the Committee on Food Habits wished to improve the nutrition of all American citizens through their work. While nutrition was important, wartime morale was also important as it was deemed essential to the success of the war. The Committee and Lewin had to work to keep food morale up in the many sub-cultures while also attempting to create a unified American food culture or national character. In the attempt to balance culture and national character, in the context of morale, the importance of a unified America was favoured by the Committee. This meant that while they were sensitive to the cultural differences of the various groups within the United States, they hoped to transcend these differences to create a unified American national food character which would further strengthen morale.

Chapter Six

Evaluating the Committee on Food Habits

Now that the broader themes explored by the Committee and Lewin have been explored, it would be remiss if the success of the Committee on Food Habits was not discussed in this thesis. It is extremely difficult to determine the success of such efforts as much of the archival materials dealt with finding methods to change food habits, not actual programs implemented to change food habits. Others have also found it difficult to assess the success of the Committee's effort. For example, Carleton Mabee (1987) argued that the Committee had little success. According to Mabee, Mead commented that her war work had limited effectiveness and that few of the recommendations she had made had ever been put into place. This was possibly because of Mead's observation that there was a "tremendous amount of resentment" (Mabee, 1987, p. 5) against using anthropological insight by the United States Government. Mead stated that the government was not willing to take advice or ideas directly from behavioural scientists; they only wanted information which was filtered through policy makers. This prevented those in the social sciences from truly advising the government. Two nutritional anthropologists, Montgomery and Bennett (1979), also felt that the Committee's success was limited. They did acknowledge that the food habit studies were successful because they accomplished what they set out to do, namely, research the field. However, their influence on food related behaviours was "little or none" (Montgomery & Bennett, 1979, p. 131). Perhaps it was this lack of support from the government which resulted in the failure to apply the Committee's findings.

From the available archival research, I have drawn several conclusions to why the Committee was not successful. From a reading of their archives, it is apparent that the focus of the Committee was to determine how food habits could be changed, not to implement these types of programs. It appears the role of the Committee on Food Habits was to inform social policy. There is no evidence that they wanted to directly implement these programs.

Further, there is little evidence that the Committee created materials which would be used to educate the general population on nutrition. For example, while there are plenty of references to the desire to create publications which would provide nutrition education to the masses, few examples of such work exist. Also, there is little proof that community based projects, like those hoped for by the Committee, were ever established. There is only one vague reference in the Committee's papers to a community project, the Goodhue plan, which appeared to deal with increasing local food production in a small community (Erkel, 1942). The memo says it was well organized and running smoothly, but the lack of detail prevents a true understanding of what was occurring in the region. It is possible that these types of works were created by the Committee and did not survive. However, given the scope and detail of Mead's papers it seems more than likely that if they had existed they would have appeared in the archives. Further, the failure to produce such materials may have been because the Committee believed that the government would implement their findings and follow up on their work. Also, the Committee on Food Habits may not have been able to explore all aspects of food behaviour because of their limited budget and time constraints caused by the pressing nature of the war.

In retrospect, the Committee on Food Habits' success was limited, yet at the time they seemed extremely positive about the impact of their work. They were entering new territory in the field of the social sciences, and were optimistic that they could improve society by such work. As Guthe (1945) noted:

Scientists may no longer remain isolated from the world at large in their academic environment and their laboratories. They must participate more fully, within the limits of their qualifications, in the attempted solution of the problems which face the world today. (p. 1)

The belief that social scientists could continue to translate information into action was reflected in the proposed creation of the Committee on Living Habits. It was believed that using a multi-disciplinary approach, social scientists could continue to aid the government after the war (Committee on Food Habits, 1945b). Under this new Committee, the Committee on Food Habits hoped to continue the activities they began in the war. The action research which addressed food habits was seen, by those involved, as a long term project, not just a wartime measure. While the war may have highlighted the need for such work, the importance of nutrition and changing food habits continued immediately after the war before disappearing from psychological discussions.

Chapter Seven:

Conclusions and Limitations

This thesis set out to re-examine the history of social psychology through the use of one study, Kurt Lewin's (1942a) *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits*. To do so, I have taken the approach that "social psychology's evolution must be understood . . . as plural, multisited, and morally and politically inspired" (Morawski & Bayer, 2003, p. 224). This is a departure from many traditional histories of social psychology in which the experimental findings of the work are remembered without the context. In those histories, Lewin's (1942a) classic work is remembered as an experiment about opinion change. In this work, Lewin found that women who participated in a group decision were more likely to change eating habits than women who heard a lecture. While this is an accurate depiction of the study, by re-examining the contexts for this work a more detailed understanding of the piece and the period in the field emerges.

When we begin to look more closely at *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (Lewin, 1942a), the importance of food in this study begins to emerge more clearly. This classic study is about changing specific habits, food habits. Lewin's (1942a) study was sponsored by the National Research Council's Committee on Food Habits. This Committee, an example of the multi-disciplinary collaborations at mid-century, was formed initially to improve the nutrition of the American population. The Committee produced a vast body of work which dealt with various aspects of food habits during the Second World War. While

many histories of the war discuss issues surrounding food, particularly rationing and food shortages, little attention is paid to the social scientists who were studying wartime food issues. With this information, Lewin's (1942a) study becomes one of a series of studies conducted by social scientists in order to improve nutrition during the war.

With this added information, questions arise about why nutrition and food were receiving so much attention by social scientists. A re-reading of the Committee's work, and the related discourse of social scientists of the 1940s, shows that understanding and changing food habits were important given their relationship to morale. It was the belief by both the government and the social scientists of the time, that a physically healthy civilian population would have higher morale. High morale was seen as essential to the success of the war campaign. Therefore, the government wished to find ways to improve nutrition and morale. With these facts, Lewin's (1942a) study on opinion change becomes one of a series of studies conducted by social scientists during the Second World War in order to improve nutrition and boost the morale of the civilian population.

An understanding of morale's place within Lewin's (1942a) classic work leads one to several other themes which emerge in the Committee on Food Habits' works, namely, culture and national character. At first glance, these themes do not seem related to a study on changing food habits. However, a closer reading of the surviving historical record illustrates the importance of these themes. Studies on culture and national character, as they are related to food, emerge in the Committee's interest in morale. The United States was a very racially divided country at mid-century. Years of racism and the adherence to the belief that personality was biologically determined had segregated many facets of the

population. By the 1940s, anthropologists had transmitted Franz Boas' belief that culture was responsible for the development of personality to many social scientists, including psychologists.

With these new ideas, culture, emerged as an interest in the field of psychology. Because of these changes, social scientists were now interested in understanding the many cultures of the residents of the United States. Cultural understanding was needed for the Committee's work. They believed that before they could change food habits, they had to understand them. Since food habits were seen as part of the culture of the group, food culture had to be explored. Adding this context to a remembrance of Lewin's (1942a) classic study sees the study as one of a series conducted by social scientists during the Second World War in order to improve nutrition and boost the morale of the civilian population through a cultural understanding of food.

While it is clear that the Committee and Lewin wished to understand culture, it was believed that morale would be best increased if a common national character could be found. For the Committee on Food Habits, this translated into finding ways to create an American food character. The archival evidence presented in this thesis shows that, to some extent, members of the Committee sought to create a standardized American diet. With this added information, Lewin's (1942a) classic study on opinion change can now be seen as one of a series of studies conducted by social scientists during the Second World War in order to improve nutrition and boost the morale of the civilian population through the understanding of culturally determined food habits, with the end goal being the creation of an American food character.

While the above re-examination has looked at the larger contexts which influenced Lewin's work, my research has also touched on some of Lewin's professional interests. This classic work (Lewin, 1942a) can also be seen as containing Lewin's interest in groups, democratic choice and action research. By including these in a re-evaluation of the classic text, the often cited study becomes a project on group decisions, designed as an example of action research, which set out to protect democratic decision making in order to change culturally determined food habits and work toward a unification of American food character in order to improve nutrition and increase civilian morale in a country at war. This understanding of Lewin's *The Relative Effectiveness of a Lecture Method and a Method of Group Decision for Changing Food Habits* (1942a), is more complex than is reported in most histories of the field. Themes which are not usually seen in the history of the field, such as morale, culture and national character, come to light.

While my re-examination has shed light on often forgotten pieces of the history of social psychology, it has several limitations. First of all, it has been much more difficult to construct such a history than I had imagined. The variety of social, political, academic and personal influences which impacted the creation of the study was more complex than anticipated. It has also been difficult to paint a cohesive picture as these forces do not impact the work in a linear manner. Rather, they are all working together at once, making it difficult to pull the pieces apart in order to fully understand them. Also, it would be impossible to fully explore all the contexts and influences which drove the creation of these works. Therefore, only the ones which I have deemed as most relevant have been explored in this paper. While I feel certain that these are the major influences on the work,

it is possible that my own bias has resulted in the neglecting of other influences which may have also been important to social psychologists during the Second World War. Further, it would have been impossible to explore fully each of the contexts I have examined in this thesis.

Secondly, the archival evidence proved to be more circumstantial in nature than direct. Therefore, I had to rely on my interpretations of the studies through a close reading of the works being produced by both Lewin and the Committee on Food Habits. The lack of direct evidence that discussions on morale, culture and national character occurred, may be due in part to the fact that I have relied primarily on the *Papers of Margaret Mead and the South Pacific Ethnographic Archives* housed at the Library of Congress.

However, Mead's papers constitute one of the largest collections of personal papers housed by the Library of Congress and, as executive secretary of the Committee, she would have had access to all the works being produced at this time. Although, the quality of the material that has survived is excellent and the archive itself is exceptionally well organized, other pieces of evidence may exist in other archives or collections of personal papers and correspondences which I was unable to access during the course of research.

That being said, the lack of direct evidence that the Committee and Lewin were discussing morale, culture and national character may be due to the fact that the group of people who created this work did so, not through correspondence, but rather through meetings. We know that Mead often visited Lewin in Iowa during the course of the war. Lewin also held annual informal conferences where this material likely was discussed without being recorded. Without a paper record, and because I was unable to talk with

any of those involved, the content of these gatherings remains a mystery. However, from the content of their research interests, I can assert with certainty that morale, culture, national character, groups, democratic choice and action research were explored by both Lewin and the Committee, in the context of food habits.

The re-examination of the Committee on Food Habits' works provides only one example of the type of work being done by social psychologists during World War II. It is apparent that this Committee and Lewin were influenced by action research, democracy, morale, groups, culture and national character. How far-reaching these themes were in other wartime Committees can not be assessed without a re-examination of their works. However, as these themes are apparent in one body of work, it is likely that other social psychologists were dealing with the same themes in their own work. Even if the themes of morale, culture and national character do not emerge in other works, their existence in the Committee on Food Habit's papers shows that some social psychologists were exploring these themes. By including these themes in a re-telling of the history of social psychology, a richer and more complete history of the field emerges. In this example, an often cited study on opinion change (Lewin, 1942a) becomes a multi-disciplinary project on group decisions, designed as an example of action research, which set out to protect democratic decision making in order to change culturally determined food habits and work toward a unification of American food character in order to improve nutrition and increase civilian morale in a country at war. With this new information, historians know much more about the study than they did in traditional histories of social psychology.

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