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978-0-521-47522-8 - Changing the Rules: Psychology in the Netherlands, 1900-1985

Trudy Dehue

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The historical development of the social sciences has been marked by frequent and fierce debates on the rules of scientific methodology. Even the most general criteria – which are generally agreed upon in the natural sciences – are emphatically disputed in the social sciences. In this book that phenomenon is more closely examined, using the historical evolution of twentieth-century Dutch psychology as a representative case of Western social science.

The existing variability of “methodological styles” in the development of the social sciences is illustrated by detailed historical material. Moreover, that material is used in the search for an answer to the main question of the book: how to understand the profound flexibility of standards in the social sciences. To that end, the historical scope of the study is restricted to the relatively small domain of psychology in the Netherlands, which offers a miniature image of international Western psychology. The author addresses not only “cut-and-dried” methodological criteria in manuals, but she carefully traces how certain rules in particular groups or periods could become the undisputed prescriptions for doing research.

Using published books and articles as well as interviews and archival material, Trudy Dehue analyzes the rejection, reception, and adjustment of German and American methodological styles in Dutch psychology, the rise and fall of handwriting analysis in assessment psychology, phenomenological psychology in the first postwar decades, and the “neurotic paradox of clinical psychology.” She reports of psychologists calling colleagues “riffraff and cranks” or “semi-intellectuals who take lack of clarity for profundity” and reproaching each other for “undermining respect for men” or “discreditable dogmatism.” The main thesis the author develops and tests is that in a given methodological style, apart from the *scientific* identity of the discipline, a *social identity* is at the same time given expression. Trudy Dehue argues that the degree to which a methodological style is accepted and maintained varies with the contemporary adequacy of the social identity expressed in it.

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Psychology in the Netherlands, 1900–1985

Trudy Dehue
University of Groningen



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Preface

This book, like its subject, is also the product of a long history. In this history, many people and institutions, all of whom I would like to thank for their effort and support, have played a role. From 1985 to 1989 I carried out research in the section Foundations and History of Psychology at the University of Groningen. Pieter van Strien and Gerard de Vries were my much-valued supervisors in the writing of the Dutch-language dissertation that was the result of this research. Various people – who themselves helped to make the history of Dutch psychology – provided me with information at that time and various archivists also came up with unpublished material for me (the names of the people I interviewed and the archives I visited are given in the appendix). Uitgeverij Van Gennep in Amsterdam, who published my thesis in 1990 in a trade edition, ensured that the volume looked splendid and that it received a much wider distribution than is the normal lot of dissertations.

After that, numerous private reactions from colleagues and students, as well as the writers of fourteen reviews in Dutch-language journals set me thinking again about the subject. When the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research was prepared to finance a translation into English – my special thanks go to Annemarie Bos for the friendliness with which she provided information and the efficiency with which she handled various matters – I decided to rewrite the text on a substantial number of points. But it was not only reactions from Dutch scholars that were helpful in the further development of my thinking. Kurt Danziger (who even reads Dutch), Mitchell Ash, and Bill Woodward also gave me very valuable suggestions. They provided references for more international comparison and they pointed out aspects of the original story that were so oriented to a typical Dutch public that they could not be followed by others, or would not be interesting enough to a non-Dutch audience.

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In this way Chapter 1 was largely rewritten and expanded, Chapters 2 and 3 have been made clearer, Chapter 4, in a rigorous attempt to sharpen the argument, became much shorter, Chapter 5 has been made clearer, and the Epilogue has also been largely changed. Of course, this process of rewriting took longer than I had anticipated. In the two and a half years during which I devoted the largest part of my research time to it, I was appointed to the Department of Science and Technology Dynamics at the University of Amsterdam, which offered a very stimulating and pleasant environment. I could with justice mention the names of all my Amsterdam colleagues here, but there are simply too many. For me they are best represented by Olga Amsterdamska, Stuart Blume, Ad Prins, and Paul Wouters. During this period I also worked in the section Foundations and History of Psychology at the University of Groningen, which under the direction of Pieter van Strien has for many years been my inspiring and familiar intellectual homefront. Here, too, students and colleagues offered a congenial intellectual and social atmosphere. From among them I would like to acknowledge in particular Peter van Drunen, head of the Archives of the History of Dutch Psychology, as a good colleague and friend.

Naturally, I must also mention the educational and enjoyable conferences of the Society for the History of the Social and Behavioural Sciences (Cheiron-Europe). This society offers a place for the international exchange of ideas that is indispensable for the writing of national histories too. Michael O'Loughlin translated the book without getting really angry when I changed a chapter again after he had carefully translated it. His many humorous reflections on language and culture added an entertaining extra dimension to our meetings. Alex Holzman at Cambridge University Press was always quick to answer any e-mailed question. And I want to express my great appreciation to Helen Wheeler who took care of the final editing. And I am very indebted to Anneke Pieterman for correcting proofs. So much support from others creates expectations. I can only hope that the readers of this new edition and above all those who have worked directly on behalf of the book will think that I have made good use of the help offered.

Abbreviations

Icip	Institute for Clinical and Industrial Psychology in Utrecht (<i>Instituut voor Clinische en Industriële Psychologie</i>)
NIP	Dutch Association of Psychologists (<i>Nederlands Instituut van Psychologen</i>). Known as NIPP before 1967.
NIPP	Dutch Association of Practicing Psychologists (<i>Nederlands Instituut van Praktizerende Psychologen</i>)
NRC	<i>Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant</i>
NTG	<i>The Dutch Journal of Graphology (Nederlands Tijdschrift voor de Grafologie)</i>
NTP	<i>The Netherlands Journal of Psychology (Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Psychologie)</i>
NVB	Dutch People's Movement (<i>Nederlandse Volksbeweging</i>)
NVP	Dutch Association for Psychotherapy (<i>Nederlandse Vereniging voor Psychotherapie</i>)
PAI	Psychoanalytical Institute in Amsterdam
PvdA	Labor Party (<i>Partij van de Arbeid</i>)
TRC	Test Research Committee (<i>Test Research Commissie</i>)