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978-0-521-58358-9 - Rebels within the Ranks: Psychologists' Critique of Scientific Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America

Katherine Pandora

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Rebels within the Ranks

During the 1930s, psychologists Gordon Allport, Gardner Murphy, and Lois Barclay Murphy emerged as challengers to the neobehaviorist status quo in American social science from within the fields of social and personality psychology. Willing to experiment with the idea of “science” itself, these “rebels within the ranks” contested ascendent conventions that cast the study of human life in the image of classical physics. Drawing on the intellectual, social, and political legacies of William James’s radically empiricist philosophy and radical Social Gospel theology, these three psychologists advanced critiques of scientific authority and democratic reality as they worked at the crossroads of the social and the personal in New Deal America. Appropriating models from natural history, they argued for the significance of individuality, contextuality, and diversity as scientific concepts as they explored what they envisioned as the nature of democracy and the democracy of nature.

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Katherine Pandora
University of Oklahoma



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For my family –
the Barneses, the Howells, the Kablers, the Mihaljeviches,
the Pandoras, the Pirišins, and the Rosenbaums –
who first taught me that there are many pasts before us

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Acknowledgments

I would never have reached this point without the support of many people. As a graduate student in psychology in the interdisciplinary department of Human Development and Family Studies at Cornell University, I was first exposed to primary source research in a course offered by Joan Jacobs Brumberg, who subsequently supervised my master's thesis. Her oversight of my forays into historical and cultural analysis were of profound importance. It was this experience, along with the compelling teaching of sociologist Glen Elder and historian Michael Kammen, that would lead me to pursue a doctorate several years later in the history of American science.

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University of Oklahoma made my investigation of the literature of early-twentieth-century America much easier.

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