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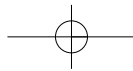
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# There is nothing so practical as a good... history: Kurt Lewin's place in the historical chapters of French language Social Psychology Textbooks

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## Abstract

*This article examines the paradoxical place occupied by Kurt Lewin in the history of social psychology. By analysing an exhaustive corpus of all French-language social psychology textbooks published between 1946 and 2000, we attempt to bring to light both the frequency of references to the author and the rhetoric employed to present his scientific contribution. Our results reveal a paradox underlying the way in which this eminent social psychologist is referred to. While the importance of his role in the formation of this discipline is emphatically reinforced, the full extent of his relevance is not accounted for. This paradox thus takes the form of a marginalisation, which is manifested in a tendency to concentrate on only a portion of his publications, in the stereotyped presentation of his experiments, and in the insufficient context provided for his studies.*

*Keywords:* Kurt Lewin, history, social psychology, marginalisation, textbooks.

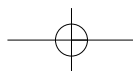
# No hay nada tan práctico como una buena historia: el lugar que ocupa Kurt Lewin en los capítulos de historia de los libros de texto de la Psicología Social francesa

## Resumen

*Este artículo examina el lugar paradójico que Kurt Lewin ocupa en la historia de la psicología social. Mediante el análisis de un corpus exhaustivo de información compuesto por todos los textos de psicología social en francés publicados entre 1946 y 2000, intentamos sacar a la luz tanto la frecuencia de las referencias al autor como la retórica empleada para presentar su contribución científica. Nuestros resultados revelan una paradoja que subyace la forma en que se hace referencia a este eminente psicólogo social. Si bien la importancia de su papel en la formación de esta disciplina se refuerza enfáticamente, no se explica toda su relevancia. Esta paradoja toma entonces la forma de una marginalización, que se manifiesta en una tendencia a concentrarse únicamente en una parte de sus publicaciones, en la presentación estereotipada de sus experimentos y en la falta de contexto de sus estudios.*

*Palabras clave:* Kurt Lewin, historia, psicología social, marginalización, libros de texto.

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2 *Estudios de Psicología*, 2011, 32 (2), pp. 0-0

## INTRODUCTION

There are various processes at work when a body of knowledge makes the transition from scientific thought to common knowledge. These processes contribute to transforming logical reasoning and knowledge, in other words scientific thought, into ordinary, lucid forms of social cognition, which can be communicated to others. One of these processes is 'personification', whereby a theory, or even a science, is rigidly associated with one person, who then becomes its symbol (Moscovici and Hewstone, 1984). One of the most favourable sites for the exposition and diffusion of a discipline's history is the 'textbook'. The textbook is often a collective work, whose purpose is to transmit both the history of a disciplinary field and its basic theoretical and methodological principles at a given moment in its development. As a branch of scientific literature, the textbook plays a role of go-between. It is written in simple terms by specialists in the field, in an attempt to simplify the theories and applications of a discipline (social psychology in this case) so as to render them accessible to other members of the academic world, and especially, to novice students. Due to its communicatory function, the textbook is subject to the processes that characterize social thought and natural logic (such as rumour, or anachronism, for example). This phenomenon has been studied at length by thinkers of the sociology of science, such as Merton (1993) or Latour (1987), to give just two examples<sup>1</sup>.

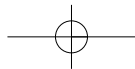
Through the analysis of an exhaustive corpus composed of all the social psychology textbooks published in the French language between the end of the Second World War and 2001, we shall here examine both the place occupied by Lewin in the history of social science and the ways in which the authors of different chapters present Lewin's contribution to the foundation of this discipline.

Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) holds an emblematic position in the history of social psychology. He is one of the most cited figures in his field (Haggblom et al., 2002; Perlmann, 1984), due to the extent of his theoretical contribution, his innovations of technique and method and the currents of thought and epistemological breaks that he initiated. He trained numerous contemporary social psychologists (Festinger, White, Lippit, Schachter, etc.), and there are at least two awards named after him: the Kurt Lewin Award, from the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology and, since 1948, the Lewin Memorial Award<sup>2</sup>, from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (an association founded by Lewin himself). Lewin is the ideal figure to evoke when demonstrating the essential and unquestionable links between general theory and specific theory, between formalization and fieldwork and between theorizing, experimentation and laboratory work. He is now a 'natural' point of reference for any author wishing to write about or study the history of modern social psychology.

## CENTRAL QUESTION

In an earlier study (Pétard, Kalampalikis, and Delouvé, 2001) Kurt Lewin's marked presence has been observed within chapters on the history of the discipline. He was found to be the most frequently and consensually evoked of all social psychologists; in other words, he is referred to unanimously. He is a true symbol in the history of the discipline. In the present study we wish to take this subject further, by asking: what is the nature of his evocation within the field? Which facets of his work are the most frequently mentioned and as part of what sorts of arguments? Which of his experiments, notions and theoretical propositions are the most cited? With what bibliographical references? What has been said about them? Has Lewin's work been inscribed in a particular political or historical context?

These questions were also nourished by another dimension of the results obtained from the same corpus. Without focusing exclusively on Lewin, we studied professional



affiliations and geographical contexts for the most cited authors (Kalampalikis, Delouvé, and Pétard, 2006). Among the 700 authors included, Lewin had the most institutional references<sup>3</sup>. Given the author's academic career, this is not surprising. However, despite his notoriety, he is no exception to the norm observed in textbooks regarding the way in which the history of social psychology is written; references to the author contain no description of his relationships to the establishments and cities where he worked, that is, of the social networks of his scientific production.

Our objective in this article is to underline the paradox regarding the strong emphasis placed on the importance of the author in the discipline's history, yet its failure to take into account the entire relevance of his contribution. Perhaps this is the effect of a trivialization of the past, which is summoned only for normative, ritualistic or hagiographic reasons ('it must be mentioned', 'we cannot *not* mention it'). This could also be a model for writing the history of a science (in this case social psychology), or a case of incomplete collective knowledge, surrounding a body of work that has been diffused and reproduced in various editions. In the context of the present article, we aim to investigate what has been mentioned, emphasized, or omitted with respect to this author.

## METHODS

Our general corpus is made of material that is *par excellence* didactic in nature: social psychology textbooks. We took into account all the indicators that contribute to reinforcing the appropriation of this material (for example, the presence or absence of authors/concepts indexes, final bibliographies, glossaries, historical chapters etc.), whether these indicators are the result of publishers decisions, or of concern for accuracy on the part of the editors. There are thus several dimensions to our study. Our first corpus, containing chapters on the discipline's history ( $n = 26$ ) (Appendix A)<sup>4</sup>, is derived from a complete repertoire of French-language social psychology textbooks published between 1951 and 2001 ( $n = 53$ ). Our second corpus contains books with bibliographies ( $n = 48$ ), and the third is composed of books with author indexes ( $n = 18$ ) (Appendix B).

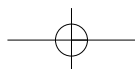
In other words, we rely on virtually any possible source of reference to Lewin's name in historical chapters, in end of book and end of chapter bibliographies, and in author indexes where available<sup>5</sup>. These three modalities bear no inherent relation to one another, but are a matter of editorial choice; they are not mutually validating, but may reveal converging information.

Given the multiplicity of possible sources of reference to Lewin, we cannot claim an exhaustive status for this study. To achieve this it would have been necessary to extend the analysis beyond textbooks, by including other forms of scientific publication, such as monographs, articles in specialized journals etc. Even these do not fully account for the variety of materials that treat the author, or mention him. However, our corpus is internally coherent, due both to the nature of the published materials (textbooks) and to the articulation of three distinct levels of analysis. This coherence is consolidated by the global approach of our research, which aims to reveal collective practices in the construction of the history of social psychology (Good, 2000; Kalampalikis et al., 2006) based on a single form of publication.

## RESULTS

### Lewin in chapters on the history of social psychology

As was mentioned above, an initial general analysis of these chapters revealed that, given Lewin's representativeness and the frequency with which his name appears, he is classed among the top three most cited authors in chapters on the history of social



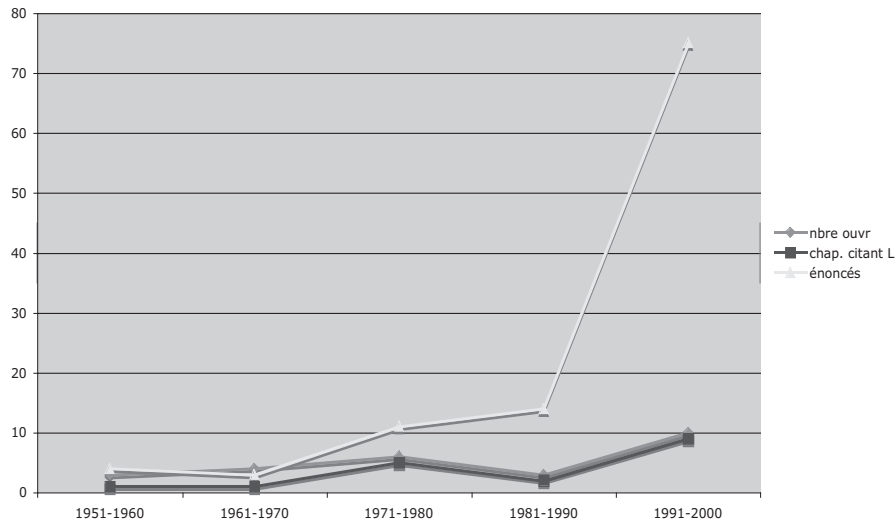
4 *Estudios de Psicología*, 2011, 32 (2), pp. 0-0

psychology. The two other most frequently cited authors are Gabriel Tarde and Émile Durkheim, but Kurt Lewin is *the* most cited social psychologist. Not only is he cited very frequently, but his name appears in 19 of the 26 chapters, that is, in nearly three quarters of them. Yet, how have these references been distributed over time? Is Lewin evoked with the same frequency and in the same way in 1951 and in 2001?

Over the course of this period we note a very distinctive quantitative evolution in references to Lewin. Three phases may easily be discerned: from 1951 to 1970 few chapters cite Lewin, or he is mentioned 'discretely'; from 1971 to 1990 these references begin to increase, and five out of six chapters on the history of social psychology mention Lewin; finally from 1991 to 2000, Lewin is abundantly cited in nine of the ten chapters (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

*Evolution over a decade of text segments and chapters referring to Lewin compared with the number of published works with historical chapters*

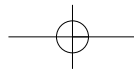


The increasing periodicity seems to indicate the development of a broad consensus concerning Lewin. However, this provides no information regarding content: what has been written about him? Of the seven textbooks published during the first phase (1951-1970), two authors refer to Lewin, conveying relatively limited information. Lewin is viewed as one author among many. Minimal information is given regarding content, except to evoke topology or the notion of 'planned change'. For example:

[1954a]<sup>6</sup> Personology is treated by masters such as Gordon Allport, Lewin, Murray, Young and Stagner; racial and national group psychology by Bogardus, Garth and Klineberg; public opinion by Lippmann, Childs, Cantril; censorship and propaganda by Lasswell, Doob, Bartlett, etc. [...] Moreover, Lewin's topological psychology employs geometric concepts and vectors to describe the individual in his or her milieu. Graphs are used to represent the positive and negative forces which lead to phenomena of attraction and repulsion in the individual.

[1963a] Although they are very different, Lewin and Moreno illustrate this tendency to combine theoretical and practical ends within the same discipline. [...] With Kurt Lewin, this tendency proposes the notion of 'planned change', of which society itself, enlightened by the psychologist, would be the agent and the beneficiary.

From 1971 to 2000 historical chapters routinely refer to Lewin (15 out of 18 authors), and from 1990 the number of text segments increases considerably. However, this progression is not homogenous. From 1971 to 1980, the number of authors who



cite Lewin rises, but the number of text segments remains low, while from 1981 to 2000, the number of text segments noticeably increases<sup>7</sup>. Despite these disparities, it is clear that interest in Lewin has distinctly increased since the 1970s, with a particular surge over the last decade. All of the analysed chapters refer to him, and treat different aspects of his work more or less superficially.

#### *Lewin and his work*

Text segment contents may be divided into two main categories: that relating to Lewin's work, and that relating to Lewin himself (his relationships, his influence, the positions he occupied...). For the first category, we distinguish between theoretical text segments, which address notions and concepts, and those referring to methodological questions. By grouping together the years during which Lewin is referenced minimally or with little information (1951-1990) and comparing this period with the latter period (1991-2001) (see Table I), several observations may be made.

TABLE I  
*Distribution of chapters presenting Lewin's work, in relation to number of textbooks*

	1951-1990	1991-2000
Theory	6/10	4/8
Notions and Concepts	6/10	7/8
Methods	2/10	6/8

We note that, for both periods, references to theoretical questions and to notions and concepts are relatively stable. However, methodological questions, which are cited relatively infrequently during the first period, often figure in the chapters of the second period. Overall we also note the presence of fewer theoretical questions in the most recent period, while text segments relating to questions of method have noticeably increased.

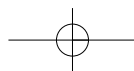
Theory-related text segments refer to Gestalt theory, *Gestalttheorie*, as the major source of inspiration for Lewin's works. Although topology is also often mentioned, authors rarely make reference to theoretical physics, or field theory. Another observable trend is the presence of references to the importance that Lewin attributed to theory in the elaboration of experimental hypotheses. For example:

- {1994} Secondly, Lewin was also one of the first to insist on the fact that hypotheses should be clearly formulated (rather than vaguely or in an exploratory way), and be principally derived from theoretical formulations.
- {1999c} For Lewin this reference [to field theory and to abstract theories] constitutes, above all, an epistemological field necessary for theoretical construction and for the elaboration of concepts, which are indispensable for experimental validation.

For text segments relating to notions and concepts, we designate a first group uniting the notions of change, resistance to change (often linked to changes in eating habits) and interaction. A second, less frequent group contains references to groups, group dynamics and leadership.

Finally, concerning the *modus operandi*, two aspects are often stressed: first, the necessity of establishing a link between theory and practice and between theory and experimentation; and, second, on a different level, the ideas of the group as laboratory, of action research and of intervention. For example:

- {1993} Here we must also add the dual approach of action research; a well-known example of this is Lewin's previous study on resistance to change.
- {1996b} Kurt Lewin is also the initiator of an approach called 'action research'.



6 *Estudios de Psicología*, 2011, 32 (2), pp. 0-0

- [1997] The methods of intervention are inspired by a current of thought developed by Lewin, known as 'action research'.

References to this methodological dimension, cited as characteristic of Lewin's work, thus increase significantly between 1990 and 2001. Why? In order to address this question, we will turn our investigation to a bibliographical analysis and to an examination of the references given in the *index nominæ*, which may provide comparable results.

*Lewin's career and influences*

Not surprisingly, the term 'founder' is widely associated with Lewin, who is sometimes referred to as the father of social psychology:

- [1994] In 1944, he founded the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which he ran until 1947, the year of his death.
- [1997] It was Lewin who introduced the idea of group dynamics in social psychology, but he is more generally considered to be one of the founders of social psychology. After providing a description of some of his major lines of thought, this section will present his reflection on groups.
- [1984] Several psychologists view Lewin as the founder of modern psychology.
- [1999a] In 1945, Lewin, the 'father' of social psychology, founded a research center for the study of phenomena occurring in small groups.

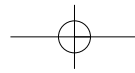
Very often, however, Lewin's name forms part of a constellation of other famous figures, who are cited as his teachers or as having influenced him (Cassirer, Koffka, Köhler...), who conducted research with him and benefited from his influence, and also from his aura, both in Europe (Dembo, Zeigarnick...) and in the United States (Lippitt, White, Festinger...).

A comparison of the two periods indicated above (1951-1990 versus 1991-2001) reveals an increase in text segments referring to Lewin's status as founder and to his *curriculum vitae* for the latter period. Yet in stressing Lewin's relations with other researchers (as a pupil or colleague), these descriptions of the author depart from the usual textbook portrayal of important figures in the discipline. They are more often presented as ethereal or isolated creatures (Kalampalikis et al., 2006).

**'Little Lewin, big Lewin': Analysis of bibliographical references**

Of the 53 textbooks published in the French language we select those containing final bibliographies or end of chapter bibliographical references ( $n = 48$ ). It should be noted that among the 5 textbooks omitted from the study, some contain no bibliographical references (de Moura, 1990, for example). The most common case, however, is the presence references in the form of footnotes. In order to facilitate data collection for this investigation, we opt not to select these textbooks in this study. The fact that the majority of these introductory textbooks contain a final bibliography is, once again, the result of editorial policy and choice of editor, and does not indicate anything about the authors or about the writing style. Of the 48 books that include one or more bibliographies external to the main text, 40 (slightly more than 80%) cite Lewin at least once.

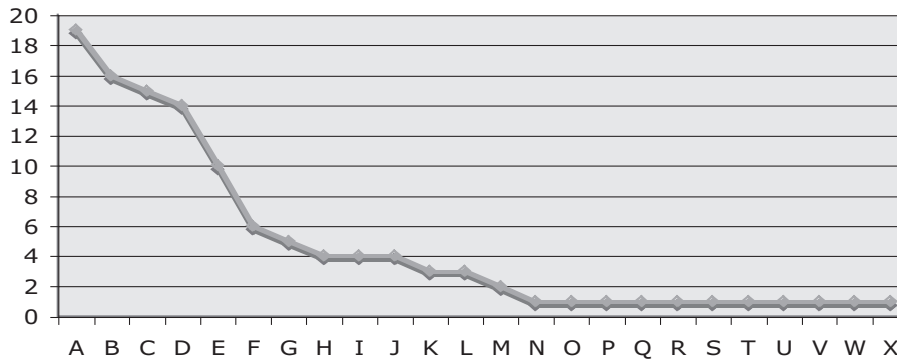
Lewin was of German origin<sup>8</sup> and published his first studies in German. Following his emigration to the United States some of his work was translated into English, and all of his works were published in this language after he settled in America. Our corpus contains no references to any texts (articles or books) in German. At best, a few collections of texts containing certain translations are mentioned, as we will see further on. Lewin's scientific output can be divided into journal articles, book chapters, books and volumes of selected works. Slightly less than half of the references found in our



corpus relate to articles from books (42%), and the rest relate to articles authored or co-authored by Lewin.

The 40 textbooks displaying at least one reference to Lewin in their bibliographies refer 116 times to articles or books that Kurt Lewin authored or co-authored. The most cited reference ( $n = 19$ ; equal to 16.40% of total references) is the article 'Group Decision and Social Change', written by Lewin some time before his death for the work *Readings in Social Psychology*, edited by Newcomb and Hartley (1947 for the original edition, followed by many subsequent editions). Nine references are made to the original article published in English and ten to the translation published in the book *Psychologie sociale. Textes fondamentaux* by Lévy (1965 for the first edition). By grouping the different editions of the same work together with its translations, we obtain 24 different references, which can be divided in the following way in terms of frequency:

FIGURE 2  
Number of references per publication by Lewin cited in textbooks

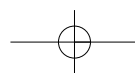


The obtained curve shows that the number of most popular and most cited articles and books (and thus, in theory, the most frequently consulted by authors of textbooks) is relatively low. At the lowest end of the curve, we observe a great number of references occurring only once. Note that the first 6 references alone represent nearly 69% of the total number of references (80 out of 116):

TABLE II  
Lewin's six most cited bibliographical references

<i>n</i>	Référence
A	19 «Group decision and social change» and «Décision de groupe et changement social»
B	16 <i>A dynamic theory of personality</i> et <i>Psychologie dynamique</i>
C	15 <i>Field theory in social sciences</i>
D	14 <i>Resolving social conflicts</i>
E	10 «Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created "social climates"»
F	6 «Forces behind food habits and methods of change»

Lewin's studies on changes in eating habits are by far his most cited. Six references are made to the first publication in the *Bulletin of the National Research Council*<sup>9</sup> and 19 references to the text written for Newcomb and Hartley's book (1947), or to its





translation. One fifth of all bibliographical references to Lewin refer to his study on the consumption of organ meats in American homes during the Second World War.

Lewin's three most referenced books are all collections of articles, and it should be noted that two of them were published after his death. *A Dynamic Theory of Personality* was first released 1935. These 'selected papers' (as the subtitle indicates) consist of articles originally written in German, articles already published in American journals<sup>10</sup>, or unpublished texts by Lewin. *Field Theory in Social Science* and *Resolving Social Conflicts* were published in 1948 and 1951 respectively. The complete titles, *Field Theory in Social Sciences: Selected and Theoretical Papers* and *Resolving Social Conflicts. Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*, only appear once for each of the works in our corpus. The distribution of references for each of the 40 textbooks is fairly homogeneous, and there are no significant disparities. Applying the well-known line from the Gospel of Matthew to the scientific world, Merton (1968) defines the 'Matthew effect' as 'the accruing of greater increments of recognition for particular scientific contributions of considerably renowned scientists and the withholding of such recognition from scientists who have not yet made their mark' (*ibid.*, p. 58). It seems reasonable to wonder if this is the effect we are witnessing concerning references to Lewin.

### Two inevitable experiments: 'Social climates' and 'eating habits'

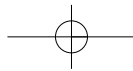
Among the 18 textbooks that contain extracts relating specifically to Lewin, and whose indexes were analysed (Appendix B), we observe three types of patterns. First, *rhetorical* patterns in the treatment and description of a given Lewinian experiment; next, *conceptual* patterns, relating to the choice of a given Lewinian theoretical proposition to be presented as representative of his work (notions, theories etc.); and, finally, *epistemological* patterns, in the manner in which Kurt Lewin is presented as a person. This latter category also extends to the sociopolitical, historical and disciplinary context of the emergence and inscription of his work, and his network of colleagues and his Centre, in other words, the context for his scientific activity. It goes without saying that these patterns sometimes co-exist within a single sentence, as the example of the 'slogan', '*There is nothing so practical as a good theory*' most eloquently proves.

In order to express the main results obtained in the analysis of extracts from 18 textbooks, we focus on two examples that illustrate these patterns. Our results show that studies on 'social climates' and 'eating habits' respond to the question elaborated in the previous section, concerning the ways in which the Lewinian experiments most cited in these textbooks are presented. Our analysis of extracts from 18 social psychology textbooks in fact corroborates that which was presented previously. The two experiments most frequently found in the analysed extracts are those on social climates (66.6%) and those on eating habits (50%). It would seem that the vast majority of textbook authors consider that these experiments are the two examples that most convincingly and clearly illustrate Lewin's work for the novice student (the typical reader of textbooks).

In chronological terms, we observe certain diachronic changes over a period of 42 years. Depending on the textbook's publication date<sup>11</sup>, we note that frequency<sup>12</sup> becomes stabilized for 'social climates', and increases slightly for 'eating habits'. Despite the high periodicity of these experiments, which are among the best known of those elaborated by Lewin and his colleagues, textbook authors provide few precise historical and bibliographical elements. This was found to be a common trait among all references to these studies in our corpus, as the following extracts exemplify:

#### 'Eating habits' extracts:

[1998] The American government at the time became aware that organ meats, which were considered to be 'low-grade' pieces of meat, were rarely consumed. Lewin, an Austrian emigrant, studied this phenomenon (...).



- [1998] The American government at the time became aware that organ meats, which were considered to be 'low-grade' pieces of meat, were rarely consumed. Lewin, an Austrian emigrant, studied this phenomenon (...). Lewin (1947) analysed this phenomenon, among others, in one of his action research experiments in which he tried to provoke a change in the eating habits of Americans during the Second World War. (...) The experiment carried out in 1943 on the modification of eating habits illustrates this idea. Lewin and his colleagues wanted to encourage American housewives to consume organ meats.
- [1993b] As we saw above, in his experiment on organ meats the antifascist Lewin, brought back the 'Panurgian' model of crowd behaviour; likewise, Marx depicted industrial work as simply the sum of individual efforts.

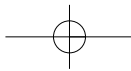
'Social climates' extracts:

- [1972] By making the distinction between 'driving forces' and 'restraining forces' it was possible partially to explain behavioural differences under autocracy and democracy (Lippitt and White, 1943); this difference marked a crossroads in Lewin's scientific interests between the study of leadership and group processes and the study of the effects of autocratic government.
- [1993b] Indeed, Sherif (1936, 1948) returned to certain Gestalt theory experiments to show the emergence of laws of composition within groups (one experiment on autokinetic movement and others on the formation of groups of children). Likewise, Lewin's work is frequently presented, especially by Piaget (1968), as an example of the structuralist approach, in that he has recourse to the concepts of 'forcefields' and quasi-stationary equilibrium.
- [1994] The themes of leadership (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939), cooperation and competition (Deutsch, 1949), social power (French, 1956), conformity to a group (Asch, 1952) and interactive process (Bales, 1950) were thus studied many times.

The sociological, political and historical context of these studies, when evoked, does not permit the reader to grasp the true purpose of these 'experiments', the role of Lewin and his colleagues with respect to institutional requests, or even the relevance of the psychosocial perspective with respect to these kinds of urgent social questions (Cooke, 2007). References to Lewin's work on 'eating habits', (either by referring more generally to the 'American government', or directly to Lewin's quasi-personal interest) fail to mention the collective and interdisciplinary work undertaken by the National Research Council's Committee on Food Habits, or the place or role of the anthropologist Margaret Mead in requesting the participation of Lewin's research group (Maslow, 1969). For 'social climates' we find little or no allusion to the research program that produced the results, which are presented in a general way by Lippitt and White in 1947<sup>13</sup>. However, while this is not the case for 'eating habits', references to this experiment are often comparative (Sherif, Skinner, Deutsch, Piaget, Asch etc.), allowing us to situate its results within the broader history of the discipline.

## DISCUSSION

Through the analysis of a particular form of scientific writing, the textbook, our results underline what we view as a paradox. References to Kurt Lewin as a fundamental author of social psychology – the 'tribal patriarch' to use Marion's expression (2004) – insist firmly on the significance of his contribution to the construction of the discipline, yet neglect to account for the full extent of his relevance. Of course, the significance of this affirmation is extremely localized, given the specificity of our corpus, which does not permit us to extend our conclusions to other forms of publication that treat Lewin's contribution (books, articles, etc)<sup>14</sup>. However, the exhaustive nature of the corpus studied allows us to highlight several significant patterns, which we shall briefly summarize. From a chronological point of view (1946-2000), references to Kurt Lewin, the most frequently cited figure, were found to increase with time. Lewin is also the social psychologist with the widest institutional network, although the meaning, reasons and social circumstances of these successive



## 10 *Estudios de Psicología*, 2011, 32 (2), pp. 0-0

affiliations are not clearly explained. The majority of authors refer to only two of his experiments when presenting his work, often relying on a limited number of publications. Our examination of the place of Kurt Lewin in the historical chapters of French-language social psychology textbooks thus reveals a paradox. Although Lewin is the emblematic author of the discipline and the most frequently cited, references to him tend to focus on only a portion of his publications, presenting stereotypical descriptions of his experiments and failing to contextualize his work properly. It appears that Lewin is the object of a paradoxical form of marginalization. Although he is the author of some of the most dynamic and innovative work in social psychology (Moscovici and Markova, 2006), his scientific output is presented in a static fashion.

We are aware of a level (Rouquette, 2005) or communicative genre (Markova, 2007) – close to the role played by distribution and in part propagation in the perception of social representations (Moscovici, 2000). It consists in distributing and spreading a “general interest” message (here the place given over to Kurt Lewin in the history of modern social psychology) by addressing a specific group (mainly psychology students). This level of communication influences both the form of the message (producing stereotypes) and its content (by causing high level personification).

Kurt Lewin’s undeniably fundamental role in the development of social psychology has now become part of our discipline’s *doxa*. However, the transition from figuring in the history of a science to forming part of its *doxa* is not an entirely smooth process. In the case under investigation here, this transition has revealed the presence of a ritual, one which is no doubt inherent to all processes of scientific vulgarization of a commemorative nature. This ritual consists in honouring, while, at the same time, forgetting. In other words, it is an example of the ‘obliteration by incorporation’ phenomenon (Merton, 1993): scientific consensus is progressively integrated, gradually becoming amnesic regarding its origins the more it is diffused. Beyond this phenomenon, our study further reveals another facet of this process of reproduction: the generation of a common model of writing. This model displays certain continental particularities, which, moreover, confer a different tone on Lewin’s scientific production and on the image we have of him<sup>15</sup>. However, in similar ways these corroborate a more wide-ranging model of the didactic diffusion of history, a collective practice of writing the history of social psychology, which would no doubt benefit from self-applying the Lewinian maxim: *there is nothing so practical as a good... history*.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> An earlier study highlighted this type of process with respect to references to the Hawthorne inquiry, to the ‘precursor’ Norman Triplett and to Platonic philosophy (Pétard, Kalampalikis, and Delouée, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Allport (1950), Margaret Mead (1954), Otto Klineberg (1956), Fritz Heider (1959), Theodore Newcomb (1962), Muzafer Sherif (1967), Morton Deutsch (1968), Dorwin Cartwright (1978), Marie Jahoda (1980), Bluma Zeigarnik (1983), Milton Rokeach (1984), for example, are among researchers who have received this award.

<sup>3</sup> Institut de psychologie de l’Université de Berlin (1 occurrence), Université de l’Iowa (2), Research Center for Group Dynamics (3), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT (4), Université du Michigan (5).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed explanation of the construction of this corpus cf. Pétard, Kalampalikis, Delouée, 2001; Kalampalikis, Delouée, Pétard, 2006.

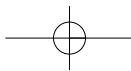
<sup>5</sup> Beyond being a practical choice, which allowed us precisely to locate the references to the author we were looking for, this decision had metric value, in the sense that it enabled us to map out and demarcate specific references to Kurt Lewin. The context for references were demarcated in the same way for each textbook with an index. This process involved isolating the sentence containing a reference to Lewin, as well as the sentences preceding and following it.

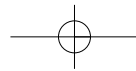
<sup>6</sup> The dates in brackets refer to the social psychology textbooks analysed and presented in appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> It should be stressed, however, that sometimes an increase in the proportion of references to Lewin increases due only to certain authors within a decade. For example, from 1991 to 2000, 70% of the text segments are found in three out of the nine historical chapters that cite Lewin.

<sup>8</sup> This is in fact a simplification, since Lewin was born in Mogilno on September 9, 1890. This city, now in Poland, was at the time in the Province of Posen, a Prussian province that was part of the German Empire until the end of World War One.

<sup>9</sup> Given the fact that it is difficult to access the *Bulletin of the National Research Council*, it is not surprising that this document is not very often cited, especially since Lewin wrote a second text. It should be mentioned, however, that the National Academy of Sciences has made the ‘Report of the Committee on Food Habits’ available online: <http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn = ARC000024&page = 1>





- <sup>10</sup> The article, 'The Conflict between Aristotelian and Galileian Modes of Thought in Contemporary Psychology', for example, was originally published in volume 5 of the *Journal of General Psychology* (1931, pp. 141-177). We did not find this reference in any textbooks, and even the French translation cites the 1935 work.
- <sup>11</sup> 'Social climats': (1957: 4, 1969: 5, 1972: 3, 1986: 1, 1992: 1, 1993: 2, 1994: 4, 1998: 4, 1999: 5), (average: 3.4). 'Eating habits': (1957: 1, 1970: 2, 1972: 1, 1976: 1, 1979: 3, 1993 (2): 4, 1994: 1, 1998: 6), (average: 2.1).
- <sup>12</sup> We calculated frequency based on the occurrence of three expressions/words: 'eating habits', 'organ meats' and 'low-grade'.
- <sup>13</sup> Incidentally, it should be noted that these two experiments are among the rare French translations of Lewin's publications. In French there are only two book-length studies on Lewin. These excellent works describe and introduce translations of some of these texts (Faucheux, 1959) or analyze the whole of the Lewinian theory (Kaufmann, 1968).
- <sup>14</sup> An analysis of cocitations in scientific articles shows that authors are continuing to cite Lewin (Marion 2002), and that he is also cited within new disciplines (for communication sciences, cf. Rogers, 1994).
- <sup>15</sup> For example, among the 18 textbooks analysed, the only 5 that evoke the catch phrase, now a leitmotiv ('There is nothing so practical as a good theory'), were all written by North American authors.

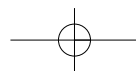
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- MOSCOVICI, S. & MARKOVA, I. (2006). *The making of modern social psychology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
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- ROUQUETTE, M.-L. (2005). La «communication sociale»: entre pléonasm et subversion. *Hermès*, 41, 33-38.

## Appendix A

### List of 26 social psychology textbooks used (by year of publication)

- [1954a] Heuse, G. (1954) *Eléments de psychologie sociale générale*. Paris, Vrin.
- [1954b] Sprott, W.J.H. (1954[1952]) *Psychologie sociale*. Paris, Payot.
- [1957] Klineberg, O. (1957) *Psychologie sociale, tome 1*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- [1963a] Daval, R., Bourricaud, F., Delamotte, Y. et Doron, R. (1963) *Traité de psychologie sociale, tome 1*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- [1963b] Stoetzel, J. (1963) *La psychologie sociale*. Paris, Flammarion.
- [1967] Zajonc, R.B. (1967) *Psychologie sociale expérimentale*. Paris, Dunod.



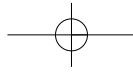
12 *Estudios de Psicología*, 2011, 32 (2), pp. 0-0

- [1968] Prévost, C. et Rocheblave-Spenlé, A.-M. (1968) *Leçons de psychologie générale et sociale*. Paris, Baillière et Fils.
- [1973] Maisonneuve, J. (1973) *Introduction à la psychosociologie*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- [1974] Castellan, Y. (1974) *Initiation à la psychologie sociale*. Paris, Armand Colin.
- [1976] Albouy, S. (1976) *Eléments de sociologie et de psychologie sociale*. Toulouse, Privat.
- [1977] Badin, P. (1977) *Aspects psychosociaux de la vie collective (volume 2) La psychologie de la vie sociale*. Paris, Editions du Centurion.
- [1979] Bégin, G. et Joshi, P. (1979) *Psychologie sociale*. Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval.
- [1980] Basagana, R. (1980) *Eléments de psychologie sociale*. Alger, Office des publications universitaires.
- [1984] Gergen, K. et Gergen, M. (1984) *Psychologie sociale*. Laval, Etudes Vivantes.
- [1986] Andréeva, G. (1986) *Psychologie sociale*. Moscou, Editions du Progrès.
- [1987] Fischer, G.-N. (1987) *Les concepts fondamentaux de la psychologie sociale*. Paris, Bordas.
- [1993] Maisonneuve, J. (1993) *La psychologie sociale*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- [1994] Vallerand, R.-J. (éd.) (1994) *Les fondements de la psychologie sociale*. Boucherville, Québec, Gaëtan Morin.
- [1996a] Gosling, P. (éd.) (1996) *Psychologie sociale*. Rosny-sous-Bois, Bréal.
- [1996b] Tapia, C. (éd.) (1996) *Introduction à la psychologie sociale*. Paris, Editions d'Organisation.
- [1997] Fischer, G.-N. (1997) *La psychologie sociale*. Paris, Seuil.
- [1998] Cazals-Ferré, M.-P. et Rossi, P. (1998) *Eléments de psychologie sociale*. Paris, Armand Colin.
- [1999a] Bédard, L., Déziel, J. et Lamarche, L. (1999) *Introduction à la psychologie sociale*. Saint-Laurent (Québec), Editions du Renouveau Pédagogique Inc.
- [1999b] Cerclé, A. et Somat, A. (1999) *Manuel de psychologie sociale*. Paris, Dunod.
- [1999c] Pétard, J.-P. (éd.) (1999) *Psychologie sociale*. Rosny-sous-Bois, Bréal.
- [2000] Roussiau, N. (éd.) (2000) *Psychologie sociale*. Paris, In Press.

## Appendix B

### Textbooks with authors indexes ( $n = 18$ )

- Albouy, S. (1976). *Eléments de sociologie et de psychologie sociale*. Toulouse, Privat.
- Andréeva, G. (1986). *Psychologie sociale*. Moscou, Editions du Progrès (première édition en russe en 1980).
- Castellan, Y. (1969). *Initiation à la psychologie sociale*. Paris, SEDES.
- Cazals-Ferré, M.-P. et Rossi, P. (1998). *Eléments de psychologie sociale*. Paris, Armand Colin.
- Demailly, A. (1993). *Psychologie sociale*. Lyon, L'Interdisciplinaire.
- Deutsch, M. et Krauss, R. (1972). *Les théories en psychologie sociale*. Paris - La Haye, Mouton (première
- Faucheux, C. et Moscovici, S. (1971). *Psychologie sociale théorique et expérimentale*. Paris - La Haye, Mouton.
- Gergen, K. et Gergen, M. (1984). *Psychologie sociale*. Laval, Etudes Vivantes.
- Klineberg, O. (1957). *Psychologie sociale*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, tome 1, (1959) tome 2
- Lemaine, G. et Lemaine, J.M. (1969). *Psychologie sociale et expérimentation*. Paris - La Haye, Mouton.
- Leyens, J.-P. et Yzerbyt, V. (1997). *La psychologie sociale*. Bruxelles, Mardaga (réédition complétée).
- Maisonneuve, J. (1973). *Introduction à la psychosociologie*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.



- Myers, D.G., et Lamarche, L. (1992). *Psychologie sociale*. Montréal, Mc Graw Hill.
- Newcomb, T.M., Turner, R.H. et Converse, P.E. (1970). *Manuel de psychologie sociale*. Paris, Presses
- Pétard, J.-P. (Dir.) (1999). *Psychologie sociale*. Rosny-sous-Bois, Bréal.
- Stoetzel, J. (1963). *La psychologie sociale*. Paris, Flammarion.
- Vallerand, R.-J. (Dir.) (1994). *Les fondements de la psychologie sociale*. Boucherville, Québec, Gaëtan Morin.
- Zajonc, R.B. (1967). *Psychologie sociale expérimentale*. Paris, Dunod.

