THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE AND THE POLITICS OF MEMBERSHIP: Psychological Associations in South Africa and the German Democratic Republic

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This article examines the origins and development of psychological associations in the German Democratic Republic and the Republic of South Africa and the ways membership in the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS)—founded in 1951—figured in the process. The political regimes in these 2 countries had difficulties of their own in achieving a standing in the international community and, as a result, psychologists faced significant dilemmas in gaining legitimacy for the discipline. Membership in the IUPsyS served an important function in gaining legitimacy for the discipline in both countries, but it also contradicted legitimizing strategies that involved the countries’ distinctive political and social structures. Membership in the IUPsyS was sufficiently important for psychologists to try to strike a compromise between different legitimization strategies.

Psychology developed quite spectacularly after the second world war in many countries. This development can be traced in a number of ways: its growth as an academic discipline (new specialist areas, increasing student numbers, more staff appointed), as a profession (increasing emphasis on practical—applied matters, the growth of clinical psychology, state recognition and sanction, employment patterns of psychologists), and as an international enterprise (international bodies, international journals, coordination across countries). The formation of the International Union of Scientific Psychology (IUPsyS)¹ as the major international body with which national psychological societies could affiliate was a significant part of this process.

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¹ The International Union of Scientific Psychology was founded in 1951. In 1965 the name was changed to the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPS). Seventeen years later, in 1982, the acronym IUPS was changed to IUPsyS after the International Union of Psychological Science became a member of the International Council of Scientific Unions. In this article we use the name International Union of Psychological Science and the acronym IUPsyS.
This expansive growth, however, was not a natural, unproblematic process that unfolded as the discipline became entrenched in many societies. Quite the contrary, we argue: Psychologists had to struggle for recognition and acceptance and had to work at promoting a societal identity for the discipline. This process often is referred to as *legitimation*, which Geuter (1992, p. 163) defined as the "attempts to use specific arguments to prove the necessity or usefulness of psychology to those important for the recognition of the subject." As Geuter indicated, these strategies typically are aimed at demonstrating either practical or scientific–theoretical usefulness. Evidence of the two approaches is not hard to find in the psychological literature: Geuter's own study on the professionalization of psychology in Nazi Germany is a case in point. Similarly, Napoli (1981) showed how American psychologists pursued practical applications of psychology between 1920 and 1945, while protecting their work and reputation as scientists, and Haas (1995) demonstrated how both scientific and practical concerns operated in Dutch psychology between 1920 and 1975.

Legitimation strategies are by definition collective, with practitioners and academics acting as members of a group. Most of the activities involved in legitimation strategies require collective action: formulating training programs, institutionalizing psychology curricula at universities, demarcating the work of psychologists from that of other occupations, obtaining state recognition for professional practice, and so forth. Within psychology, a strong indicator of this collectivization is the formation of national psychological associations (see Highard, 1987; Louw, 1987; and Napoli, 1981, for examples of the history of such associations).

In this article we examine the formation of psychological associations in two countries: the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Republic of South Africa. We chose these two countries for a particular reason: Their political and social contexts provided unique challenges to psychologists arguing for the necessity and usefulness of psychology. Both countries underwent dramatic changes after World War II. The GDR was made anew after 1945, forming itself into a society based on Marxist–Leninist principles. In the early 1990s this regime came to an abrupt end. In South Africa, the National Party government after 1948 acted to solidify and rigidify the system of racial domination and oppression now widely known as apartheid. In 1992 this system too collapsed, with bans lifted of such political parties as the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress, and the Communist Party and, in 1994, the first fully democratic elections.

Given their precarious international positions, the political regimes of these two countries had legitimation concerns of their own. In both cases their right to exercise political authority over their citizens was questioned (for different reasons) by the international community and by large sectors of their own citizenry. In the case of East Germany the government at least had an international linkage to the communist countries, whereas the South African regime became increasingly isolated as the years went by. It is therefore a strong possibility that the problems of political legitimacy were connected to the legitimation strategies pursued by psychologists. Sometimes the strategies were interdependent; sometimes they were contradictory. If the collectivization of psychology was intertwined with attempts to argue the usefulness of psychology to important audiences, then the radical political changes that swept over these countries after World War II certainly ought to provide particular challenges to psychologists.
In addition, we believe that there is another legitimation strategy for psychologists not easily categorized as either a practical or a scientific-theoretical argument. We are referring to the international linkages that psychologists in these two countries tried to establish, in particular the importance they attached to membership in the IUPsyS, which was formally constituted in July 1951, at the 13th International Congress of Psychology held in Stockholm, Sweden. The IUPsyS developed from the organizing committees of the earliest international congresses, the first of which was held in Paris in 1889 under the presidency of Théodule Armand Ribot (Holtzman, 1976). The IUPsyS’s main purpose, as stated in Article 1 of its statutes, was to promote “the development of psychological science, whether biological or social, normal or abnormal, pure or applied.” The following subsidiary objectives were defined in Article 2 (from “International Union of Scientific Psychology,” 1962, p. 211; see also “International Union of Psychological Science,” 1999):

To contribute to the development of intellectual exchange and scientific relations between psychologists of different countries and in particular for the organisation of international congresses and other meetings whether general or specialised on subjects to be determined.

To contribute to psychological documentation in the different countries by fostering international exchange of publications, books, and of reviews, of films and of bibliographies.

To aid scholars of different countries to go abroad to universities, laboratories and libraries, etc.

To foster the exchange of students and of young research workers.

It is clear that the development of psychological science could be promoted most effectively if psychologists, like other scientists, would act in concert across international boundaries. This had the potential to be a powerful legitimation strategy in terms of the scientific-theoretical recognition of the discipline, which in turn would make membership attractive to national associations.

Members of the IUPsyS are “national societies of scientific psychology, regularly established” or, where there is more than one society in a country, a federation or association that includes all of them (Article 6 of the statutes). It was recognized “that the basic strength of the organisation is derived from the national societies which are members” (Russell, 1966, p. 66). Because there was no category of individual membership in the union, the various national societies had to ensure that only properly qualified psychologists belonged to them. No restriction other than proficiency in the discipline could be imposed on membership (Russell, 1966). In addition, the goals and objectives of the national psychological societies had to be consistent with those of the union.

The statutes can be regarded as the normative rules of the IUPsyS. The question then arises as to what would happen if the statutes of national psychological associations were in conflict with them. Given the postwar history of South Africa and the GDR, we believed a good chance existed that this was the case in these countries and that there would be interesting lessons to learn from investigating their psychological associations.
The South African Psychological Association

The South African Psychological Association (SAPA) was the first national psychological association in South Africa, formed in 1948 as the official organization to speak for psychologists in academic and professional matters. Before that, South African psychologists were organized as part of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, attending its congresses and reading papers and publishing in its journal, *The South African Journal of Science*. It would seem that psychologists were satisfied with this arrangement, so much so that the impetus for the formation of the SAPA did not come from them but from pressures placed on them by their relationship with the medical profession.

As happened elsewhere, South African psychologists entered the mental health field after World War II in increasing numbers. It was not difficult for members of the medical profession to interpret this as an encroachment on their professional terrain and to react by requesting that a register for clinical psychologists be instituted, to exercise some control over these practitioners. It became clear that such a move required the existence of a national psychological association, which could represent the interests of psychologists and set standards for training and qualifications for registration.

Although the impetus for the formation of the association was largely professional, the constitution of the SAPA combined scientific and professional concerns, as indicated in the statement of objectives:

> To advance the interests of psychology as a science; to protect and promote the interests of professional psychologists; to regulate and control the activities of psychologists in their relations to other professional bodies and to members of the public; to determine the qualifications of psychologists for membership; to foster the establishment of regional branches which would promote the objectives of the SAPA in general; and to apply for, promote and obtain any act of parliament or licence necessary for the realisation or promotion of any of the objectives of the SAPA. ("The Constitution," 1962, p. 4)

As noted, one of the first issues facing the SAPA was the registration of professional psychologists. In 1951 the SAPA contemplated the establishment of an examinations board for professional psychology, the introduction of postgraduate diplomas in various categories, and controls on the title "psychologist" via legislation. In the mid-1950s four "specialty categories" were created in which psychologists could be registered (the numbers given in parentheses are the number of individuals registered in 1959): clinical (27), industrial (22), educational (45), and counseling (33). In 1960 the association had 164 members; in 1975, 338; and in 1983, 525.

Thus, from an early stage the association involved itself with the practice of psychology and with the private practice of psychology in particular. Further examples of this include the following: negotiations in the 1960s to include private psychological practitioners under the protection of professional provident societies; the association’s involvement in the standardization of the New South African Group Test of Intelligence in the 1950s and 1960s; its canvassing for control over psychological test material; the formation of a code of ethics in 1955 (Louw, 1997); and its international links with test distributors, such as the Psychological Corporation in the United States.
In South Africa it would appear that practical usefulness received somewhat more emphasis than scientific-theoretical importance in the quest for legitimacy. The South African case, however, provides one with a telling example of how difficult it is to organize collectively in a country where political divisions are stark and underpinned by draconian laws. In 1956 Josephine Naidoo, who was classified as “Indian” according to South Africa’s Population Registration Act of 1950, applied to join the SAPA. Her application forced the association to consider for the first time the issue of Black membership in a country where strict separation of “the races” was legally enforced.

The council of the SAPA asked Naidoo to withdraw her application in light of the division of opinion within the association on this matter. This she did (Louw, 1987). However, the association now had to consider what its policy should be, and this raised enough conflict for the SAPA to split into two opposing groups 5 years later, in 1961, when the association met for its annual congress in Stellenbosch. The council had resolved in the meantime to admit “whites and non-whites” as members of the SAPA and put this resolution to the congress. After a lively and often acrimonious debate, the decision was ratified, and the chairman closed the meeting with a request that the matter not lead to bad feelings among members. This, however, was a futile wish. On June 23, 1962, approximately 200 people gathered in Pretoria to establish an alternative national association, the Psychological Institute of the Republic of South Africa (PIRSA), with its membership restricted to Whites only.

The course of events in South Africa shows that when psychologists act collectively, they do not act as one undivided group of scientists or practitioners. The divisions that run through a society also affect psychologists. We have drawn attention here to the importance of the politics of race in South Africa as a divisive factor for psychologists. In a very real sense, their different stances with regard to race segregation gave them different perspectives on the legitimation of psychology: on how psychology should present itself and its expertise to powerful audiences. Those differences ultimately proved insurmountable and led to the formation of rival associations.

These events had a direct bearing on the SAPA’s quest for membership in the IUPsyS and elicited different legitimation strategies from psychologists in conflict with one another. In 1958 the SAPA applied to become a member of the IUPsyS, to establish closer links with psychology in other countries and find out more about the work of psychologists (“Die Internasionale Unie,” 1959, p. 19). In its newsletter (“Affiliation to International Organisations,” 1960, p. 140) the association stated that it would apply to the IUPsyS in Bonn, Germany, because membership would “mean recognition of the national status of our organisation.”

In July 1962, the executive committee of the SAPA received a telegram from the secretary general of the union, Otto Klineberg: “The Executive Committee of the International Union of Scientific Psychology wishes to congratulate the South African Psychological Society on its election as a member of IUSP. Letter follows” (Klineberg, 1962, p. 179). The association welcomed this communication as its formal admittance to the international psychology forum, which would enable members to participate in international research and study at foreign universities (Klineberg, 1962; Schlebusch, 1960). The acceptance of the SAPA as a full member of IUPsyS was something of which the association should be proud, the chairman stated (Klineberg, 1962, p. 171).
In the debate about admitting Black members to the SAPA, quite a few references had been made to IUPsyS and the SAPA's quest for membership. At the annual general meeting in July 1957, for example, the connection between race and international affiliation was drawn:

The question of establishing separate professional registers for European and Non-European [terms used at the time to refer to White and Black, respectively—J. L.] psychologists was then discussed, and it was found that little could be said in favour of such separation. The points in favour of one common register were many, that (c) overseas psychological organizations would not recognize a register based on other criteria than professional qualifications and competence. The latter argument was also brought forward in respect of membership: the SAPA would probably not be admitted to the International Union of Scientific Psychology if it were to restrict membership on racial grounds. The counter-argument was that the Association would also have to consider the general opinion prevailing in the Union. ("The History," 1962, p. 148)

Simon Biesheuvel, a senior South African psychologist, had very similar points to make at the Durban congress in July 1960:

The question of our membership of the International Union of Scientific Psychology has been discussed. I had an opportunity at the last international congress in Brussels to have a word with Prof. Klineberg on this point, and he told me that it would be difficult for South Africa to be accepted in view of our attitudes, but I pointed out to him that our Constitution does not disqualify anyone in terms of race and I frankly told him that de facto it is virtually impossible for a non-white to become a member, but that at any rate we have found a method whereby it is possible for non-whites to attend our scientific meetings and discuss matters with us. I think this would provide the escape which might still give us our membership. Subsequently our application was discussed at the Council of the International Union. There were those who were against our acceptance. There were others who were in favour. But the majority felt that the matter should be referred to the full meeting of Council which takes place in Bonn shortly.

Any suggestion on our part that we would now impose complete separation between psychologists of different races would lead to our rejection. ("Verbatim Report of the XIIIth," 1960, p. 207)

A year later, at the annual meeting of the SAPA at Stellenbosch, Biesheuvel expressed himself as follows:

I did discuss with Prof. Klineberg, the present Chairman of the International Union of Scientific Psychology, the possibility of South Africa's affiliation to the International Body.

As you know we applied last year and so far the Association has not been informed of the official outcome of this at all. In fact, at its last meeting it was felt that South Africa could not be affiliated if we had clauses of discrimination in our Constitution. Knowing that we were still engaged in discussions of this matter, I asked Prof. Klineberg not to convey this decision—to hold it in abeyance, because I felt that this was a matter which we would solve amongst ourselves. I did not think, at that stage, that we were going to reach a solution as easily if there was a suspicion of external pressure. I also put to him that the type of solution we were discussing was one where the Constitution would admit members of all races but that in recognition of local problems and points of view, local centres would be left
entirely free to make such ad hoc arrangements as indicated by their peculiar circumstances. I was given to believe that if that were the solution we would resolve on, that there will be no difficulty at all about affiliation to the International body. ("Verbatim Report on Proceedings," 1961, pp. 248–249)

On November 11, 1962, a report appeared in a South African newspaper, the Sunday Express ("But This Apartheid," 1962), that, according to the SAPA, created the impression that it had been granted affiliation to the union because of the foundation of a new all-White society for psychologists and the resignation of Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoord (himself a former professor of psychology) as honorary member of the association. The council of the SAPA released a press statement declaring that there was no connection among the formation of the all-White association, the resignation of the prime minister, and the granting of international affiliation to the association.

What had happened was that two legitimation strategies had come into conflict. One was directed at the domestic political regime, to fit into a policy that encouraged organizations to create separate associations and professional registers for people who were "not White." The other was directed at the international community of fellow professionals and scientists, who did not allow any form of discrimination in membership. The rules of the international psychological community contradicted the practices and expectations of the state as a significant audience for local psychologists. The events described here make it clear that South African psychologists could not resolve this impasse. As a consequence, the psychological community split between psychologists who aligned themselves with a legitimation strategy that recognized the state as a primary audience and those who saw the international community of scholars and practitioners as a more important audience. Indeed, it is striking that no mention of contact with the IUPsyS is made in any of PIRSA’s documents.

This was not the end, however, of the intriguing interplay among South African race politics, membership in the IUPsyS, and membership in the national associations. In 1983 the SAPA and PIRSA merged to form the Psychological Association of South Africa (PASA). The new association had no membership restrictions other than formal psychological qualifications. This coincided with a steady increase in international attempts to isolate the South African government as a strategy to induce democratic reforms. One type of international action was the academic boycott, in which foreign scholars were discouraged from traveling to South Africa and South African scholars prevented from making official visits abroad. This raised political issues in quite a different way in dealings with the IUPsyS. In 1990, for example, the chairperson of PASA mentioned that great problems were being experienced in obtaining visas for South African psychologists to attend the congress of the International Association of Applied Psychology in Kyoto, Japan. Membership in an international body now provided powerful arguments against the academic boycott; R. Mauer, who played a major part in the attempts to gain admission to Japan for the International Association of Applied Psychology congress, expressed it like this:

Possibly the greatest advantage that accrues to any national scientific association which is affiliated to one of the member unions of the International Council of Scientific Unions is to be found in the broader exposure that it offers in terms of
international recognition. ("IUPsyS—Psychology's International Voice," 1990, p. 6)

Another advantage was related to the emphasis placed by the IUPsyS on the principle of free interchange among scientists. The IUPsyS was willing to intervene if scientists from a given country were barred from a meeting for political reasons and, when it became clear that the Japanese government was going to ban South Africans from the Kyoto conference, the officials of the IUPsyS made representations to the Japanese government through the conference organizers. The result was that visas were issued to South African delegates. Indeed, toward the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s much of the contact between the IUPsyS and PASA was associated with difficulties South African psychologists experienced in getting admitted to international congresses.

The IUPsyS appealed to three principles enshrined in its statutes when it opposed restrictions placed on South African psychologists: the universality of science; the free circulation of scientists; and its strong position against discrimination on the basis of factors such as sex, religion, race, political stance, color, or language. Underlying these principles is a strong belief in science as a truly international enterprise, and it would appear that South African psychologists opted for this legitimation strategy in a changed political environment.

The Society for Psychology of the GDR

The collectivization of psychologists in the formation of a national association, the legitimation strategies followed, and the links with the IUPsyS followed a different trajectory in the GDR. Psychology in the GDR in the 1950s was very much a university-based discipline, and a very small one in terms of the number of institutes, staff, and students. Until the end of the 1950s only three institutes of psychology existed in the GDR: Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden. The total numbers of students were quite low: 16 in 1955, 50 in 1956, 49 in 1957, 48 in 1958, 53 in 1959, and 56 in 1960 (Dumont, 1999).

The East German state exercised control from the center over the universities and university disciplines. The Second Reform of Universities in 1951, for example, introduced two political demands that had profound effects on psychology (and science in general): Science had to be oriented toward Marxism and toward research done by scientists from the Soviet Union. These demands were accompanied by an increase in the influence of the Socialist Unity Party within the universities (Laikto, 1997). The Second Reform also created the Scientific Council for Psychology to develop a national curriculum, a task that was completed in 1954 (Gast, 1955).

At the Third Conference of Universities of the Socialist Unity Party in 1958 the political demands on the universities increased. Sciences in the GDR were once again required to be oriented exclusively toward Marxism and toward sciences in the Soviet Union. The conference also launched an official process of social reconstruction under the slogan "debourgeoisification of the sciences" (Entbürgerlichung der Wissenschaften). Several established professors of psychology were accused of being bourgeois and forced to leave the universities (Dumont, 1998, 2000). In addition, a policy of systematic employment, the so-called Nomenklatura, was established, which meant that certain people acceptable to the party were earmarked for appointment as professor.
Another result of the conference was the resurrection in 1959 of the Scientific Council for Psychology, which acted in many ways like a psychological society. It had to develop a description of the tasks of a professional psychologist and to confirm a new curriculum. It also had to publish a journal, and in 1961 the first issue of Probleme und Ergebnisse der Psychologie appeared. The effects of the political demands were already visible: The first council for psychology had been dominated by "bourgeois" psychologists who started their training before the second world war in Germany and abroad, whereas the second council contained mainly young psychologists who had started their training after the GDR was formed and who were in many cases members of the Socialist Unity Party.

The influence of the political climate in the GDR was also seen in publications. One issue of the journal Pädagogik in 1958–1959 addressed the development of a Marxist psychology. It was argued that this discussion was necessary because "the publications [in Pädagogik—K. D.] contained many mistakes regarding the use of Marxist–Leninist philosophy" (Vier, 1959, p. 1). The development of a Marxist psychology received a further impetus from the first GDR Colloquium of Psychology in 1959, initiated by Werner Straub (from Dresden) and organized by the Scientific Council for Psychology. Its aim was to clarify the anthropological foundation of psychology (Menschenbild in der Psychologie), based on Marxism. The papers of this colloquium were published in the first issue of Probleme und Ergebnisse der Psychologie. Klix (1961) was quite blunt about the purpose of the colloquia, calling them a result of the new political and economic conditions in the GDR and the new demands on psychology.

The construction of the Berlin Wall commenced on August 13, 1961. Two months later, on October 13, 1961, the Scientific Council for Psychology decided to establish a commission to investigate the possibility of establishing an East German society of psychology. On October 19, 1962, the Society for Psychology (GfP) was formed. Its membership increased substantially over the years from the 54 individuals who founded it: 126 in 1964; 229 in 1968; 449 in 1972; 800 in 1975; 1,186 in 1979; 1,715 in 1983; and 2,458 in 1987 (see Siebenbrodt & Noack, 1987; see also Appendix, Document 1, in the present article). In 1990, after the German unification, the GfP decided to dissolve and to leave its members free to apply for membership in the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie, the Berufsverband Deutscher Psychologen, or both (Pawlik, 1994).

According to the constitution ("Statut der GfP," 1970, pp. 1–2) the main objectives of the society were the following:

To promote psychological theory and practice.

To increase the achievement of psychology and thereby increase the reputation of the socialist society and the GDR.

To motivate its members to reach an advanced level in their scientific work and to reach a high social output in their psychological practice.

To develop cooperation among various people working in the field.

To support the development of socialist personnel.

To maintain progressive traditions in the field and develop new scientific topics.

To develop relations with other disciplines.
To support the exchange of ideas within international associations and with scientists from abroad.

To counsel official institutions in the GDR.

To organize scientific meetings and publications.

Most of these objectives refer to academic rather than professional matters. If one looks closer, even the "descriptions of the tasks of professional psychologists" are academic rather than professional. Even the name originally suggested for the new society was the "Scientific Society for Psychology in the GDR" (see Appendix, Document 2). In its general activities, too, the society revealed a primarily scientific orientation. Beginning in 1964, a national congress was held every fourth year with published proceedings; the society took over publication of Erfahrungen und Probleme der Psychologie and published an annual bulletin, Psychologie Information, in which organizational problems were discussed, meetings announced, and scientific results published. Only in 1980 did the society start to develop training programs for professional psychologists (see Appendix, Document 3). In terms of the legitimation arguments we explore in this article, one recognizes a strong emphasis on the scientific–theoretical usefulness of the discipline.

Large numbers of psychologists acceded without much difficulty to the demands made on them by the ruling political regime. At the very least they were keen to express their separation from their West German counterparts, in line with the general separation of the two states. They furthermore presented psychology as part of a socialist society and as a contributor to that society's advancement. Thus, the views of psychologists on the practical usefulness of psychology were quite different from what was typical of other societies; they differed markedly from those of their South African counterparts. This form of collective action had a particularly dark side in that it excluded some members by means of policies such as Entbürgerlichung and the Nomenclatura. Furthermore, these overtly political stances formed an obstacle to membership in the IUPsyS.

The GfP used familiar arguments for why it wanted to become a member of the IUPsyS, such as exchanging scientific information and results and increasing the importance of psychology. However, it also argued that membership in the IUPsyS had implications for the recognition of the GDR as a sovereign nation (see Appendix, Document 4). This occurred in the context of the isolation of the GDR by the Hallstein Doctrine, according to which the West German government would break off diplomatic relations with any state that recognized the GDR, and by policies of Western governments in general (Childs, 1988).

In 1964 the GfP applied formally to the IUPsyS for membership. In response, James Drever, then president of the IUPsyS, identified a problem with the application:

The question before the Committee was how best to prepare the application, so that it might be accepted by the Assembly at its meeting in Moscow in 1966. In this connection it was felt that the second paragraph of Article 2 of your Statuette would be controversial and might lead to further delay in the acceptance by the Assembly of your Society. The Soviet and Polish representatives on our Committee were in agreement with this view. (Appendix, Document 5)

Drever was referring to the objectives of the society, which stated that psychology should be developed on the basis of dialectical and historical mate-
rialism. Also, the GfP interpreted its objective to guard against "unscientific" views as opposing antihumanistic and imperialistic theories. Under this objective the society would champion scientists living in West Germany who were working for humanism, democracy, and social progress ("Statut der GfP," 1963).

Two documents in the archives of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party show how the delay was interpreted. The first is a letter from Helmut Kulka, a member of the board of the GfP, to Jochen Siebenbrodt (then secretary of the GfP) on December 30, 1964:

Dear Jochen,

As you requested in your letter of November 12, 1964, I will give you information about the talk which I had with Prof. Leontjew in Ljubljana, which Dr. Hacker shared as well.

Leontjew told us:

At the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the IUPsyS in Rome the application of the Society for Psychology in the GDR was discussed and put aside. Reason: In the statute there are expressions which can be seen as political goals and/or which can been interpreted as judgment over another society. The IUPsyS is opposed to commitments of political, confessional, or worldview matters as well as judgments on other societies that are members of the IUPsyS. Prof. Leontjew gave the recommendation to modify, i.e. to change, the statute and to apply again after some time has passed. The same arguments and recommendations were given to me by Prof. Tomaszewski (Warsaw).

(Appendix, Document 6)

This interpretation, based on the information given by Aleksej Leontjew, was that the constitution of the GfP could be interpreted as an attack on West Germany. Walter Maeder, then representative of the Department of Sciences at the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, with responsibility for psychology, reacted as follows:

The application for membership of the IUPS was handed in one year ago. Prof. Leontjew (USSR) and Prof. Turski (Poland) [probably Prof. Tomaszewski from Warsaw] are members of the Executive Committee of the IUPS. When the members of [the] Executive Committee discussed our application, some representatives of Western countries were objecting to our membership because of the following sentence included in our statute: "[The GfP] contributes to the development of psychology on the basis of dialectical and historical materialism and to the promotion of the scientific discussion of different opinions."

Although the president of the German Society for Psychology, Prof. Metzger, was arguing against the doubts raised and supported the application, neither Prof. Leontjew nor Prof. Turski supported our application actively.

Therefore it was possible that our application was put aside and this will lead to real difficulties because of the expected change in the membership of the Executive Committee (likelihood of Prof. Metzger leaving the Executive Committee), or anyway the "Hallstein Doctrine" will come into force. (Appendix, Document 7)

It is clear that the ideological (socialist) stand taken by the GfP and the way it would champion certain West German psychologists were the main arguments used by the IUPsyS to delay granting membership to the GfP. The
East German psychologists, like their South African counterparts, were now caught between two legitimation strategies: to appeal to state support by promoting "the reputation of the socialist society and the GDR" or to promote psychology by increasing links with the international community of scholars and professionals. The GfP opted to revise its constitution as a way out of the impasse. When it resubmitted the application, membership in the IUPsyS was granted during the 18th International Congress of Psychology in Moscow in 1966.

Our interpretation that membership in the IUPsyS simply fulfilled a legitimation function is supported by subsequent developments. East German psychologists had a very low participation rate in the activities of the IUPsyS. For example, no psychologist from the GDR published a scholarly article in the International Journal of Psychology. Two pieces that did appear simply introduced the Society for Psychology (Klix & Siebenbrodt, 1968; Schaarschmidt, 1990). The language barrier certainly was a major obstacle. Also, the Journal was not available at any university or library in the GDR and therefore was not known among psychologists. The GfP was the only IUPsyS member that did not order the Journal—partly as a result of limited financial resources (see Appendix, Document 8). Members of the GfP did present papers, posters, or symposia at every international congress of the IUPsyS, but the same people tended to participate in the congresses, with a distinct lack of representation from the second and third generations of East German psychologists. One reason for this could have been the limited funding available, but there also was a lack of trust in the younger generations’ willingness and ability to represent psychology and the GDR in the accepted way.

The semiofficial congress reports of the GfP presidents provide further clues as to the function of the GfP’s membership in the IUPsyS. The authors of these reports, which were addressed to the Ministry of Higher Education and the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, repeatedly noted that the papers presented by East German psychologists were well received—especially by psychologists from capitalist countries (see Appendix, Document 9). They concluded that the influence exerted by psychologists from socialist countries was increasing at every congress.

It seems fair to conclude that IUPsyS membership was also used to emphasize the importance of psychology within the GDR and its need to expand. The “reopening” of the Institute of Psychology in Leipzig in 1974 can be seen as one concrete example. (Wundt’s institute had lost its autonomy in the mid-1960s.) The official decision to reopen the institute and to support the expansion of psychology was made only after the IUPsyS decided to hold the 1980 International Congress (to recognize and celebrate 100 years of psychology) in Leipzig.

The peculiar political position of the GDR in the years after World War II formed the background for some unique developments in psychology in that country. The desire for recognition as a sovereign state intruded into the formation of a national psychological society and its relations with the IUPsyS. Advantages of membership in the international body were defined in terms not only of scientific–academic considerations but also how it would reflect positively on the sovereignty of the GDR. The government played a much stronger role in the organization of disciplines in the GDR than in Western countries, as exemplified by the Ministry of Higher Education’s role in the formation of the GfP and the fact
that it received conference reports from psychologists. This intensified the political demands made on psychologists and influenced how they positioned themselves in relation to state officials.

Conclusion

The IUPsyS has provided a major institutional forum for the internationalization of psychology, especially in its rapid growth since World War II. The formation and development of this organization demonstrated that psychologists, regardless of the country in which they lived and worked, belonged to one international psychological community. Successful internationalization strengthened scientific-theoretical claims to the universal nature of psychological knowledge. The “psychological science” mentioned in the objectives of the IUPsyS is by implication a “universal” discipline, which studies universal processes of human beings. We believe that this claim of universality was a significant incentive for the IUPsyS to become a member of the International Council of Scientific Unions in 1982. Although this relates more to the validity of its knowledge claims, it is equally important in the successful professionalization of psychology, as the brief reference to applied psychology in the IUPsyS’s objectives indicates. There is also an internationalization of knowledge, skills, and practical expertise. Indeed, currently the IUPsyS has a standing committee on the development of psychology as a science and as a profession.

Thus, we argue that the establishment of the IUPsyS was a powerful legitimizing development in psychology, in which psychologists acted collectively as an international body of experts. It was this attainment of legitimacy that made the society an attractive and important organization for national associations of psychology, as membership in it could be used to strengthen attempts within specific societies to carve out an identity for the discipline.

When South African and East German psychologists undertook to become members of the IUPsyS they were burdened by their countries’ special political and cultural contexts. Both countries confronted an international community that opposed their policies to a greater or lesser extent, and although the GDR’s membership in the Communist bloc gave it some legitimacy, both were very aware of their low international standing. As a result, psychologists took varying positions with regard to the orthodoxies of their time. Although we have tried to show in this article how legitimizing strategies were used in the formation of the two national associations, we also have examined how they used (or struggled with) these extreme political ideologies. What do the results tell us?

First, membership in the IUPsyS served an important legitimizing function. Affiliation with an international body served as an important argument to present the discipline inside the country as being accepted at an international level. As a result, it could be used to earn the support of important national audiences. There is ample evidence that East German and South African psychologists regarded membership in the IUPsyS as important. In the GDR they were prepared to change the constitution of the GfP to comply with the union’s apolitical constitution. To justify this, leaders of the GfP advanced an intriguing argument to state officials about benefits of membership in the
IUPsyS, in that it reflected on the status of the GDR as a sovereign state. In the South African case the threat to the SAPA’s membership in the union was raised as an important consideration against excluding Black psychologists from the association, despite political pressure to do so. These arguments point to the possibility that the IUPsyS may have achieved objectives that go beyond those formulated in its constitution.

Second, in terms of legitimate strategies for the discipline’s position in society, the South African case fits Geuter’s (1992) formulation quite well. Both scientific—theoretical and practical—usefulness strategies were used, although the latter received much more emphasis than the former. In the case of the GDR, the situation was nearly reversed, but with an interesting twist. Although psychologists in the GDR advanced mostly a scientific—theoretical rationale for the discipline instead of a practical—applied strategy, one finds a very strong political—ideological commitment. Here practical usefulness was mainly understood as the support psychology as a scientific discipline could provide for the reputation and development of a socialist state. The practical—applied arguments used here addressed not professional psychology, as in South Africa, but the political—ideological expectations of state officials. The explicitness with which this was done suggests an interesting expansion of the legitimizing strategies Geuter noted. It also illustrates the claim that legitimization is a process that occurs at many levels and is addressed to many different audiences, which may or may not be conflicting at times.

Third, we explained the different emphases in terms of factors outside psychology itself: the political circumstances and conditions in which psychologists found themselves. The formation and development of psychological associations in South Africa and the GDR cannot be divorced from the wider political contexts of these two countries. In South Africa, the initial formation of a national association had little to do with national politics and more with professional and academic motives. The subsequent development of the psychological association, however, was directly affected by the policies of the government regarding separation of Blacks and Whites. In the GDR, the formation of the national society can in fact be seen as a response to the position of the East German state vis-à-vis West Germany. The acceptance of the association into the IUPsyS was seen as acceptance of national sovereignty. Furthermore, the fact that two German states existed continued to play an active role in the development of the association.

The radical political changes that swept through South Africa and the GDR after the second world war thus provided daunting challenges for psychologists in the two countries. Both of the associations discussed in this article went about the business of promoting the discipline in their respective countries, and it may in fact be this factor that pulled psychologists into the central political conflicts of the time. Because psychologists, as they did in so many countries, saw the advancement of the discipline in terms of its “social relevance,” their collective attempts at legitimizing the discipline forced them to make political choices. In both cases membership in the IUPsyS was politically useful for psychologists, as it helped them to circumvent international boycotts and other exclusionary measures. The legitimacy they obtained for themselves in this way, however, also gave a little more legitimacy to the political regimes under which they had to work.
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Appendix

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