

Ian Waterhouse: A Journey in Psychology

My parents used to say that as a small boy I asked, "What part thinks?" I have no recollection of this, or of their answer, but I guess it points to an early curiosity about our psyche. Entering first year at Sydney University, I had no clear sense of vocation; I enrolled in psychology because people said it was interesting, and it was on at a convenient time! It so captured me that I aspired to an Honours course and did well. The luminaries of that era at Sydney University (1939-41) were Tasman Lovell, who had written a fascinating book on *Dreams and Dreaming*, A. H. Martin, with a strong interest in industrial psychology and measurement of individual differences, and Cecil Gibb, who had a deep interest in personality. I also joined the Honours stream in anthropology [where A. P. Elkin (*Australian Aborigines*) and Ian Hogbin (*Law and Order in Polynesia*) gave fascinating lectures] and I gained insights into how growing up in other cultures influences our beliefs and behaviour.

World War II supervened and led to a vast range of practical experiences. First, while in camp I was summoned to Eastern Command and put in charge of an aptitude testing section aimed at minimising wastage in training schools. About the same time, moves were afoot in Melbourne at Army HQ to set up the Australian Army Psychology Service. I was assimilated into that, joining Don McElwain and Sam Hammond on the HQ staff. Later, I served in five different parts of Australia, gaining experience in assessment of recruit intakes, selection of personnel for specialist training, appraisal of army delinquents, assessment of mentally-disturbed soldiers in army hospitals, and then in vocational guidance of soldiers being discharged. For much of the time we had little supervision of the kind I would today deem essential. On discharge I was invited to join Bill O'Neil's staff as a Teaching Fellow at Sydney University, before being appointed as psychologist to its Guidance Office for ex-servicemen. In those days Carl Rogers's book on counselling and psychotherapy was my guide.

In 1949 I was awarded a CRTS Overseas Training Scholarship and went to Yale University to undertake its PhD Clinical Psychology program. There was a HUGE mandatory seminar component – a general colloquium where each faculty member had two hours to discuss some aspect of his/her special interests and relevant research techniques. There was also a statistics course, where I was introduced to analysis of variance and covariance, factor analysis and non parametric statistics, and a basic course on learning, emphasising the reward-reinforcement Yale line, given by Neal Miller. Other seminars I attended included Personality, Research Design, Abnormal Psychology, Projective Techniques, Mental Deficiency, Individual Testing and Introduction to Psychotherapy. It was a rich diet!

Work in psychotherapy was often observed from behind a one-way screen and always recorded for later breath-by-breath dissection by John Dollard. The focus was on principles derived from the book *Personality and Psychotherapy*, which he co-authored with Neal Miller. Dollard seemed to like my work, but suggested that one day I should "make friends" with psychoanalysis. Part of my clinical program involved an internship in the Yale Child Study Centre.

I was rather opportunistic in the research area – working with Irvin Child on the effects of frustration on constructiveness of behaviour in a sample of university undergraduates. This was to extend the well-known effects of frustration as an antecedent to aggression, regression and withdrawal. Then there was an opportunity to work on aspects of the effects of prefrontal lobotomy – a topic which was at the time (1941) being actively explored internationally. This involved devising a method of measuring responses based on food seeking and experimentally-induced fear in monkeys (!). The lobotomies were performed by Karl Pribram, a neurosurgeon.

While I was at Yale, Bill O’Neil and Oscar Oeser visited me to see Yale and what I was doing. When an offer came from Oeser of a senior lectureship at Melbourne University, I jumped at it. There I would once more join my earlier colleagues, Don McElwain and Sam Hammond. At Melbourne, my principal task was to run the second year course focussing on child development. I drew inspiration from Dollard and Miller, of course, but extended to Erik Erikson, Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud, John Bowlby, Al Bandura, Robert Havighurst, Jean Piaget and many others!

I helped McElwain for some years as assistant editor of the *Australian Journal of Psychology*. When he went to the Chair of Psychology at the University of Queensland, I was appointed to succeed him as editor (1961+). Naturally, this made me even more active in APS affairs. At that time we were still the Australian Branch of the British Psychological Society; later I participated in the planning discussions for transformation into the autonomous Australian Psychological Society. Much later, in 1982, I became President.

In Melbourne, I had an opportunity to undertake a personal analysis and training with Australia's first training analyst, Dr Clara Geroe. This improved my understanding of myself and others enormously and led to an appreciation of the role of unconscious motivation and symbolic activities. My lectures and clinical acumen improved. I used to go weekly to the Psychiatry Department of the Royal Melbourne Hospital to perform psychological assessments. I did my best to give a meaningful appraisal of mental processes and underlying motivational patterns, and participated in their case conferences. Likewise, I developed an active link with the Psychiatry Department of the Royal Children’s Hospital.

In 1957, I received, unheralded, an invitation to spend a year at Palo Alto, California, at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. No doubt I had been nominated by my Yale mentors. I accepted with alacrity! It was great to interact with behavioural scientists across the range, especially some of the psychologists (e.g., Michael Argyle, Charles Osgood) and anthropologists (e.g., Raymond Firth, Cora Dubois, and Mel Spiro) and psychiatrist Jerome Fran. Robert Sears was on the Stanford campus and people like Gregory Bateson visited. I further enriched this already stimulating environment by shuttling weekly to attend seminars at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute.

In 1965, I put my hat in the ring for the newly-established Macquarie University Chair of Psychology and Head of its proposed School of Social Behavioural Sciences. No doubt the boundaries I had been crossing between disciplines for many years were a factor in my winning the prize! It was wonderful to be in at the early planning stages of a new university. It grew from zero students to 15,000 while I was there. I am proud of the great team of psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists we assembled and of their accomplishments. I had a big administrative role, but I particularly liked teaching courses on development, personality dynamics and psychopathology, and established a Master's degree program in clinical psychology.

While at Macquarie, I had a sabbatical at the Tavistock Institute in London. I attended seminars given by John Bowlby, worked with Sandy Bourne in group discussions of psychological factors in cases presented by general medical practitioners, and immersed myself in **learning from experience** about group behaviour in both small and large groups. I came to understand some of the powerful forces at work (often largely unconscious) which can interfere with effective task performance in work groups. I think this greatly helped my later work with the large School of Behavioural Sciences at Macquarie University. This interest in group behaviour later extended to family therapy.

While at Macquarie, I started work at 7am each day at home to fit in a couple of hours work with psychoanalytic patients. I participated weekly in peer review of cases and regularly in the conferences and other activities of the Australian Psychoanalytic Society. In due course I served a term as President. I also went weekly to Rivendell Adolescent Unit (when the Director was Dr Marie Bashir) and served as a consultant for some of those working in psychotherapy. I had a similar liaison with the Cummins Unit (Psychiatry Department) at Royal North Hospital.

My journey in psychology has, I think, been characterised by openness to new ideas without premature judgment. Both breadth, and depth in some areas, is important. All knowledge is partial but it is essential to aggregate many part-solutions and be prepared to cross boundaries in our quest for an adequate grasp of most topics. Perhaps that is partly why I was appointed by the NSW Government to be Chairman of the Institute of Psychiatry for several years and to chair a committee to prepare recommendations regarding the Registration of Psychologists in NSW. Maybe, too, that stance contributed to my being appointed to other review committees (on counselling services of the Department of Juvenile Justice, and Vietnam Veterans).

To sum up ... my journey in psychology has especially focussed on exploring multifocal interacting bio-social influences on development and psychopathology, self-understanding, and understanding of group processes. Hard work and lots of luck were obviously vital! The journey is still in progress – internet excursions beckon daily!