

EDITORIAL

Authoritarianism, Ambivalence, Ambiguity

The Life and Work of Else Frenkel-Brunswik. Introduction to the Special Issue

Andreas Kranebitter and Christoph Reinprecht

andreas.kranebitter@uni-graz.at

This Special Issue of *Serendipities. Journal for the Sociology and History of the Social Sciences* deals with the works of the psychologist Else Frenkel-Brunswik (1908–1958), known to some for her research into authoritarianism, especially as one of the co-authors of the famous study *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford 1950). This study without doubt had a crucial impact on social psychology in general and the research on authoritarianism in particular. In recent years, the rise of authoritarianism in the shape of Trump in the US, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Le Pen in France, the AfD in Germany, and the FPÖ in Austria, to name but a few, has prompted renewed interest in the original study and reinvigorated intense debate about it, not least following historian Peter E. Gordon’s republication of the study and Special Issues of *South Atlantic Quarterly* and *Polity* organized by Robyn Marasco and others.¹

From the point of view of the history of the social sciences, the reevaluation of *The Authoritarian Personality* falls into a period that we might term the “twilight of the idols.” Landmark social psychological projects of the mid-20th century, most prominently the experiments by Stanley Milgram and Philipp Zimbardo, have been part of a public academic discourse for decades. In recent years, there has been a trend to reevaluate these studies by way of archival research. In both the cases of the Milgram Experiment (Perry 2013; Reicher et al. 2012) and Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment (Le Texier 2018; 2019; Blum 2018), the opening of the archives has led researchers to believe that crucial methodological shortcomings question the validity of the results. In the first case, the Yale Archives revealed that the experimenters in Stanley Milgram’s famous experiment had induced the participants to give electro shocks to the unwilling “learners” to a far greater extent than previously thought (see Smeulers 2020, 222–225). “Induction” and acting were far more of a topic in the

¹ Peter E. Gordon’s excellent essay on *Reading the Authoritarian Personality in the Age of Trump* (Gordon 2018), originally published after Trump’s election victory in 2016, was followed by his 2020 republication of the original study with Verso, London, including a formerly unpublished essay by Theodor W. Adorno intended as a draft of the study’s conclusion. Robyn Marasco’s *South Atlantic Quarterly* Special Issue “The Authoritarian Personality” (Volume 117, Issue 4) was followed by another Special Issue, *Polity. The Journal of the Northeastern Political Science Association* (Volume 54, Issue 1), based on a conference held at Yale University in 2020.

second case as well. Based on material from the Stanford Library Special Collections and University Archives, social scientist Thibault Le Texier and journalist Ben Blum found out that Philipp Zimbardo had told those participants posing as prison guards “that their role was to help induce the desired prisoner mindset of powerlessness and fear” (Blum 2018). The result of these reevaluations was that both idols have been knocked from their pedestals. Interestingly enough, both studies were criticized on ethical and methodological grounds from the beginning. Yet, this criticism was not perceived by a wider audience, which tended to accept the psychologists’ narrative uncritically for a long time until the mood shifted in the opposite direction. The exaltation of these studies, not least by historians making use of them in explaining the Holocaust, genocide, or the perpetration of mass violence in general, seems to have been the necessary condition for their condemnation. In fact, their treatment with either uncritical adherence or categorial rejection has resulted in an instrumentalization of the social science in them in media discourse, teaching practices, and textbook social science, and it is this that seems to lie at the core of the problem, likewise the simplifications in the first instance. In essence, this instrumentality has prevented their thorough reexamination, which in turn would allow for a critical continuation of this particular type of social research.

In the case of *The Authoritarian Personality*, the reception has been somewhat different. There too, the induction of interviewees into authoritarian response behavior has been highlighted as a methodological problem, as shown most recently by Kranebitter and Gruber in this volume; there too, research on authoritarianism has instrumentalized concepts without adequate problematization, as shown not least by Peter Schmidt in his contribution to this Special Issue. However, *The Authoritarian Personality* was never knocked from its pedestal because it was never placed on one in the first instance. On the contrary, criticism was published early on. Edward Shils famously criticized the study politically for its alleged failure to cover left-wing authoritarianism (Shils 1954), while the methodological shortcomings have likewise been addressed since its publication, most extensively by Hyman and Sheatsley (1954). Despite over 1,000 studies using the authoritarianism scales originally developed in *The Authoritarian Personality* until the early 1990s (Meloan 1991), numerous critics have tried to fundamentally challenge its research, leading to what Roiser and Willig have called a “strange death” (Roiser and Willig 2002), a kind of life as an undead classic.² The controversial reception itself prevented the study’s death, and rendered its manifold topics a major (and compared to Milgram and Zimbardo perhaps less symbolically charged) inspiration for later studies on authoritarianism.

One of the reasons for this, we would argue, is that *The Authoritarian Personality* was a truly collaborative work relying on multiple influences, which more than once “checked and balanced” the many authors and prevented them from jumping to conclusions. This variety of influences and backgrounds also hinders the pigeonholing of the study as either a product of the Frankfurt Critical Theorists or a classical quantitative study of personality alone. For decades, especially in the German-speaking world, *The Authoritarian Personality* was mainly perceived as a study by the critical theorists of the exiled Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Despite the contribution of several émigré social scientists from Germany and Austria, the study has never been fully translated into German. As was the case with other (mainly female) sociologists such as Käthe Leichter, Maria Hertz Levinson, and Marie Jahoda, Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s role in empirical research for the study in particular and the Institute in general remained seldom discussed in further reception. With their names, their influence was forgotten, yet this influence on *The Authoritarian Personality* was

² For a good overview of the reception of *The Authoritarian Personality* up to the 1990s, see Stone, Lederer, and Christie 1993.

significant—a specific combination of empirical sociology, (social) psychology, and psychoanalysis. These influences had emerged in Vienna in the period before World War II, where these women had been treated with hostility by established academic social scientists as feminist, Marxist, and Jewish, labeled bluntly as “odd” (cf. Kranebitter and Reinprecht 2019). After their forced displacement and flight from Vienna, this form of social research “transatlantically enriched” the US social sciences (Fleck 2011). Discussing traces and mutual influences, making visible marginalized actors as well as epistemological positions by way of archival research and theoretical comparison is what the present Special Issue of *Serendipities* aims to do. Seventy years after the original publication of *The Authoritarian Personality*, taking a closer look at Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s life and works to reveal her impact on the study and research on authoritarianism in general was overdue. What was the specific role of Else Frenkel-Brunswik in the team of *The Authoritarian Personality* with Theodor W. Adorno, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford? What influences did she introduce into the research team? How did she adapt her earlier Viennese research in exile? How did she react to obstacles and the politics of exclusion—first and foremost to antisemitism during the austrofascist and National Socialist periods, but also to her lack of institutional backing in the US in later years? In what way was her participation in the study connected to research she did during and after her work on it, especially at the Institute of Child Welfare in Berkeley? What was her lasting impact on research on authoritarianism after her death? Does research today refer to her work, and if so, how? These are some of the questions underlying this Special Issue.

Else Frenkel was born in August 1908 in the city of Lemberg (today Lviv in the western Ukraine) in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.³ Before World War I, her family moved to Bad Vöslau in Lower Austria and finally to Vienna, where Frenkel first studied mathematics and physics, then philosophy and psychology. At the age of 22, she completed her studies with the dissertation *The Association Principle in Psychology*. Both of her reviewers, the psychologist Karl Bühler and the Vienna Circle philosopher Moritz Schlick, took a very positive view of her work. Else Frenkel soon belonged to the inner circle around Karl and Charlotte Bühler, where she played an important intellectual and social role, especially in coordinating Charlotte Bühler’s psychological research on the life course, which involved several social scientists of these days, including Marie Jahoda. According to Jahoda, Frenkel seemed to have practically lived at the Psychological Institute. “If you went there and she was not there,” Jahoda wrote, “you feared for her health.” (Jahoda, quoted in Paier 1996: 25, author’s translation). Within the Institute, Frenkel was assigned responsibility for the department’s biographical research, especially that done by Charlotte Bühler, and managed to publish some of her findings. She started to undergo psychoanalysis twice, once with Ernst Kris, a fact she hid from the Böhlers. In the 1930s, the University of Vienna was a stronghold of Nazism and antisemitism, and Else Frenkel had suffered verbal attacks as a Jew long before 1938, not least by students who believed it to be a “shame not being able to finish one’s studies without attending a seminar of the Jewess Else Frenkel” (quoted from Paier 1996: 32). She was even interrogated by the Gestapo before she fled. Her escape was connected to her private life. Starting in 1928, she became closely acquainted with the Institute’s assistant, Egon Brunswik, whose position she twice filled in for at the institute in 1931/1932 and 1936. After a visiting professorship at the University of California at Berkeley in 1937,

³ The most extensive biography of Else Frenkel-Brunswik so far was written by Dietmar Paier (1996), the editor of a selection of her papers within the publication series “library of emigré social scientists” in German. Gerhard Benetka (2002) introduced her work through several entries in dictionaries of psychology. Recently, Andreas Kranebitter (2022) has given a sociogenetic view on the life and work of Else Frenkel-Brunswik for the yearbook of the recently founded Else-Frenkel-Brunswik-Institute in Leipzig, Germany.

Egon Brunswik decided to stay in the US and this finally enabled Frenkel to flee Austria to the US just in time in June 1938, marrying Egon immediately upon arrival on the ship.

After arriving in the US, Frenkel-Brunswik, as she called herself from this time on, immediately started researching and publishing as a research associate at the Institute of Child Welfare in Berkeley. A Social Science Research Council fellowship allowed her to pursue several interests. Thus, following her training in psychology and her own psychoanalysis in Vienna, she became familiar with anthropology, psychoanalysis, and sociology at the University of Chicago and in San Francisco during this fellowship, and even took a course on the history of Japan.⁴ Later on, she was a member of the different associations in these fields, including philosophy (Heiman and Grant 1974: 7). As a research associate, she worked on different projects in Berkeley. From 1943 onwards she was part of the Berkeley Public Opinion Study Group with R. Nevitt Sanford and Daniel J. Levinson, a group that in connection with Theodor W. Adorno and the exiled Institute for Social Research eventually published *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). At the same time, Frenkel-Brunswik undertook several studies connected to this project, mainly on authoritarianism in children and adolescents, leading her to the formulation of what would possibly become her best-known concept: an “intolerance of ambiguity,” an intolerance of cognitive ambiguity and emotional ambivalence found in prejudiced children.

After the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality*, Else Frenkel-Brunswik travelled to Europe in 1950 on a Rockefeller Foundation travel grant and wrote a report about the state of European psychology. Following some other fellowships, in 1956 and 1957 she stayed in Oslo, Norway, on a Fulbright fellowship (Heiman and Grant 1974: 7), where among other things she started work on a book on the “*Philosophy of psychiatric therapies*”, which involved interviewing and sending questionnaires to psychotherapists and psychoanalysts across the whole of Europe. After her return to the US in July 1957, she was still only research associate at the University of Berkeley. Despite all her successes and the scientific recognition she had received, there is a hidden story of exclusion to be observed in her case. While she was a renowned social scientist receiving a lot of fellowships and invitations, a “celebrity,” as Daniel Levinson has called her in an interview with Dietmar Paier printed in this Special Issue, this was not true on a structural, institutional level: due to a “nepotism rule,” she could not be employed at the University of Berkeley as it already employed Egon Brunswik, meaning that her job at the Institute of Child Welfare was paid privately and the teaching was done without pay. She consistently earned less than her co-authors of *The Authoritarian Personality*, i.e., approximately 75% of their salaries,⁵ and last but not least as a research associate at Berkeley in 1957, she was only half-heartedly being offered a part-time professorship combining psychology and sociology in November 1957, which, again according to Levinson, had to frustrate her (see Paier 1996: 67). Whatever the reasons and circumstances, her early death was believed to have been a suicide: on March 31, 1958, aged 49, she was found dead in her apartment with a picture of Egon Brunswik in her hands.⁶

How to relate scientific work to individual biography without dropping into the pitfalls of the “biographical illusion” Bourdieu (2017[1986]) spoke about? This fundamental question gains particular

⁴ Else Frenkel-Brunswik: Letter to Laura Barrett, 18 October 1943 (Archive for the History of Sociology in Austria [AGSÖ] 25.1.6).

⁵ Cf. Budget Project for Writing Up Material Collected by U.C. Public Opinion Study, 4 May 1946 (Institute for Jewish Research [YIVO], AJC Archive, RG 347.17.10 GEN-10, Box 18, Folder 6).

⁶ Frenkel-Brunswik seemed to have been depressed by her visit to Vienna at Christmas in 1956 as well as the set-back she experienced after her return to Berkeley in July 1957, but she was also seriously ill for a long time.

relevance and interest in view of a life profoundly shaped by critical historical and political contexts and developments. In the case of Else Frenkel-Brunswik, institutional antisemitism, the National Socialist regime, and exile had a huge impact both on her research interests and academic career, and her private life. Following Bourdieu, the “biographical illusion” refers to a specific way of representing life stories based on the “not insignificant presupposition that life is a history [...] inseparably the sum of events of an individual existence seen as a history and the narrative of that history” (Bourdieu 2017[1986]: 210). In contrast, Bourdieu argues that, from a sociological point of view, life trajectories with their various stations and positions can only be analyzed in relation to the social field where they are carried out. “In other words, one can understand a trajectory [...] only on condition of having previously constructed the successive states of the field through which the trajectory has progressed” (Bourdieu 2017: 215). With regard to the life and work of Else Frenkel-Brunswik, we may identify three structural aspects of being positioned. First: emancipation; second: the specific conditions enabling social sciences to develop as an academic field; third: the ambivalences of exile.

First, emancipation: Frenkel-Brunswik’s parents were actively involved in Jewish (also religious) life in Vienna but shared a specific understanding of Jewish assimilation, which went far beyond investments in good education. Else Frenkel attended Eugenie Schwarzwald’s educational reform school, the first school in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy where girls could graduate (high school entrance examination), and the first which was known for encouraging young women to develop creativity, an open-minded spirit, and a sense of individual autonomy. Emancipation thus refers to a process of structural change enabling individual liberation as intellectuals, women, and Jews. Similar to many other women of her generation and social class, Else Frenkel-Brunswik became interested in “sciences” such as mathematics, physics, psychology, and national economy, and also shared a vital interest in Vienna Circle debates on logical positivism (as mentioned above, Moritz Schlick reviewed her PhD thesis). In other words: We can understand emancipation as both personal and intellectual liberation and as a fight for social recognition and equal opportunities; creative education as a lever; science as a key concept also for everyday life; and the scientist as an occupational profile of successful emancipation.

Second, the specific conditions enabling social sciences to develop as an academic field: Emancipation did not necessarily open up access to the hallowed halls of academia. As Andreas Huber shows in his contribution to this volume, in Vienna, the inner circle of academia had been usurped by German nationalism, male power networks (nepotism), and antisemitism. It is often said that Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s research interests (prejudice, antisemitism, authoritarianism etc.) can be interpreted against the background of her own experience of antisemitism and marginalization. More precisely, one should add the fact that the newly emerging fields of the modern social sciences, including social psychology and psychoanalysis, developed on the periphery of Viennese academia: newly established research infrastructure functioned as an incubator for innovation that had been impeded within the dominant institutions (such as the university). Its decentralized character brought albeit often underfinanced research closer to societal life and to social problems, also creating new opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, exchange and dialogue (Reinprecht and Walch 2020). This modern understanding of empirical social research was crucial for later careers in exile contexts, which despite all the difficulties and ambivalences also meant liberation from the constraints of local production conditions.

Third, ambivalences of exile: Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s experience of exile in the United States after 1938 is marked by a double contradiction. On the one hand, she was confronted with institutional and also gender-related mechanisms that, for a long time, fixed her in a fragile position within the

US academic system. At the same time, this marginal position is related to her radical and autonomous approach to social research, marked by a transfer of Viennese-related scientific elements (Karl and Charlotte Bühler, the Vienna Circle, psychoanalysis) into a US context. Soon after her arrival in the US she distanced herself from the Böhlers, opened up more to psychoanalysis, while at the same time continuing to use and further develop the methodological skills she had been trained in by Charlotte Bühler. It was also due to this particular mixture of theoretical and methodological perspectives and competences that she gained access to the Studies in Prejudice research group. The resulting contribution to *The Authoritarian Personality* is the subject of several articles in this anthology. The experience of exile stands in conflict with a too simplified concept of continuity/discontinuity. Exile is a reflexive practice, and this refers, in the case of Else Frenkel Brunswik, not only to the transfer of knowledge but also to the transformation of a habitus socialized in Vienna. It is not simply an uncomfortable position, but one that requires a certain nonconformism. And this is perhaps how we should read Else Frenkel-Brunswik's unorthodox dialogue between social psychology, psychoanalysis and sociology.

As mentioned above, one of the earliest and most outspoken critiques of the methodology of *The Authoritarian Personality* was a paper published by Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley (1954) in a volume edited by Marie Jahoda and Richard Christie, which was a thorough reevaluation of the study. Starting from a critique of the study's sampling procedures, Hyman and Sheatsley mainly focused on unjustified over-generalizations not based on empirical evidence. This not only affected the quantitative sections, but also Frenkel-Brunswik's in-depth interviews. According to the authors citing different evidence, rigidity as a general phenomenon was not necessarily correlated with ethnocentrism—at least, factors like sub-cultural differences, differences in the importance of ethical attitudes, group membership and degree of activism etc. would have to be taken into consideration (Hyman and Sheatsley 1954: 61). Both critics acknowledged, however, that the main differences stemmed from the fact that “*the concept of rigidity is ambiguous*” itself, being handled differently by different authors (ibid.). The problem, then, was not so much the study of the cases themselves, even though the authors criticized Frenkel-Brunswik's as well as Adorno's interpretations in some detail (ibid.: 89–107), but the over-generalizations based on single cases. But again here, the most severe instances cited referred to other parts of the study, most of all Morrow's study of prison inmates (ibid.: 56) and the quantitative sections. In fact, one particular point of Hyman's and Sheatsley's critique was that the “*understatements*” (ibid.: 57) found throughout the study misled the uncritical reader into believing some of the over-generalizations.

In our view, this “understatement” was closely connected to Frenkel-Brunswik's carefulness not to draw too wide a conclusion based on, at times, scant evidence. It was not her, however, who was to be criticized for this scant evidence. Hyman and Sheatsley seem to have indicated this, as well as the gender dynamics involved, when discussing the question of a positivistic or a more flexible treatment of data. Regarding the combination of multiple methods, they wrote (in the language of the 1950s):

Such a joining of methodologies loses much of its possible value if the rich clinical data are merely juxtaposed against questionnaire responses which are quantified and interpreted in a positivistic way. [...] In the marriage of the two methodologies, the quantitative statistical method is all too often cast in the role of the stodgy husband who just answers ‘Yes, dear’ to all the bright suggestions made by the wife (ibid.: 71).

What the two critics essentially confirmed by this, however inadequate the wording might be, is that despite the shortcomings of Frenkel-Brunswik's parts—inappropriately identified as the “wife” to the quantitative parts, which after all were no less her domain as a trained mathematician—these were a rich source that had been interpreted creatively, and were constantly undervalued by the social sciences in the study's reception due to a general gender bias. To us, it seems safe to say that her parts and influences make up much of the fascination the study provokes to this day, while at the same time they answered much of the criticism to come. Else Frenkel-Brunswik continued her own research on authoritarianism during and after publishing *The Authoritarian Personality*, thereby implicitly and explicitly responding to much of the criticism the study had received. This is true for her studies with a total of 1,500 prejudiced children aged 11 to 16 (of whom 120 were interviewed in depth, cf. Frenkel-Brunswik 1974: 64) for the Institute of Child Welfare, only parts of which have been published. We want to stress three important methodological changes she undertook in these studies compared to *The Authoritarian Personality*. Firstly, she used more open questions in her questionnaires, e.g., letting children complete sentences, thus moving away from a structured to a more unstructured questionnaire.

The solution which we have chosen for the group level was to administer a relatively unstructured questionnaire. Instead of asking ‘Do you think Negroes are lazy?’, we stated ‘Some people are lazy’ and then asked, ‘What people?’, thus giving the subject considerable freedom in how they could respond to such an item.⁷

Open questions were also used regarding the traits of communists, “real Americans,” and people with loud voices—thus always allowing for ambiguous responses. The results, interestingly enough, showed that in overall unprejudiced children, there was a greater readiness to exclude out-groups than to assign negative characterizations.

Secondly, she confronted one general critique issued early on (cf. Hyman and Sheatsley 1954: 66), namely that *The Authoritarian Personality* study was only concerned with so called “High Scorers,” i.e., respondents of the questionnaires scoring high on all questions measuring an authoritarian attitude, in contrast to “Low Scorers” and especially “Middle Scorers.” In her ongoing research, Frenkel-Brunswik shifted interest to middle scorers as well, and included them in her in-depth interviews.

On the whole our subjects with a high score on the ethnocentrism scale were freer in expressing prejudice in the interviews than the low scoring children were in expressing tolerance. Furthermore, the middle scorers who are more representative, at least numerically, of the total population show great similarity in their responses to the high scorers. Thus the attitude of the children as a group is predominantly a prejudiced one.⁸

Segregation, for example, was supported by 82% of the high scorers, 72% of the middle scorers, and 14% of the low scorers in her sample. This single item being the most distinguishing item, it showed that the middle scorers were in many respects closer to the high scorers than believed, again questioning the thesis that the latter were simply society's “pathological” cases.

Thirdly and most importantly, however, she moved the study even further to what she called the more “neutral ground” of perception. Taking the finding of ambivalence towards authorities, who were feared and hated as much as they were loved and submitted to, as a starting point, she asked

⁷ [Frenkel-Brunswik, Else]: Prejudice in Children. 1951 (AGSÖ 25.2).

⁸ Ibid., 6f.

about the recognition or denial of ambivalence towards objects and, furthermore, of “ambiguity of any sort” (Frenkel-Brunswik 1974: 67). Carrying over this thesis into experiments involving the recollection of stories and the perception of pictures moving slowly from showing a dog into a showing a cat, she proved a rigid adherence to the original stimulus until this was given up for haphazard guessing as soon as the stimulus-boundness contradicted reality too much, thus showing the close relatedness of rigidity and chaos.

A shift of research emphasis from the emotional to the perceptual area controls certain social biases which may interfere with the investigation of social and clinical topics. Controversial issues can be delineated and at least indirectly examined in a more neutral context. The experiments have shown that the tendency to resort to black-white solutions, to arrive at premature closure – often at the neglect of reality – and to seek for unqualified and unambiguous solutions which had been found so characteristic of the social and emotional outlook of ethnocentric subjects could also be ascertained in their perceptual responses. (Frenkel-Brunswik 1954: 245)

These changes in Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s research design and methodology are but one example of a fruitful and promising inclusion of and answer to criticism expressed about different parts and aspects of *The Authoritarian Personality*. With the many contributions to this Special Issue, we aim to make visible and relatable the many contributions made by Else Frenkel-Brunswik to research into different forms of authoritarianism.

A common concern of the six articles in this Special Issue dedicated to Else Frenkel Brunswik is to make visible, critically discuss, and contextualize Else Frenkel’s scholarly contribution to the studies on *The Authoritarian Personality*. The contributions are organized in a somewhat chronological order. In his article *The Authoritarian Institution. Else Frenkel and the University of Vienna*, Andreas Huber places Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s time in Vienna into the context of the history of Vienna between the wars, when antisemitism was steadily increasing especially among the staff and students at the University of Vienna, a stronghold of Nazism long before Austria’s “Anschluss” to the “Third Reich” in 1938. In this increasingly hostile and violent atmosphere, there were a few allies, including members of the Vienna Circle such as Rudolf Carnap and Moritz Schlick, and Karl and Charlotte Bühler, whose Institute of Psychology Frenkel-Brunswik soon joined as research assistant. Alongside her Jewish origin, the experience of gender discrimination and antisemitism at the University of Vienna definitely shaped the life and work of Else Frenkel, Huber concludes.

Andreas Kranebitter and Fabian Gruber—in their paper *Allowing for Ambiguity in the Social Sciences. Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s Methodological Practice in “The Authoritarian Personality”*—study the development of Frenkel-Brunswik’s research methodology from her early works in Vienna to her contributions in exile. By focusing on lesser-known publications and unpublished archival sources, they reread *The Authoritarian Personality* study within the context of her oeuvre, thus shedding light on the many ways of she contributed to the overall study. Particular attention is given to Frenkel-Brunswik’s critique of the Nazi psychologist Ernst Rudolf Jaensch, whose typology-approach is presented as an “authoritarian social science” in contrast to Frenkel-Brunswik’s social psychology of authoritarianism. After opening a dialogue between the approaches of Else Frenkel-Brunswik and Theodor W. Adorno, the paper shows how Frenkel-Brunswik—also in response to the numerous critics of *The Authoritarian Personality* study—distanced herself from quantification and a positivist approach.

Their paper is followed by Christian Fleck's closer look at *Else Frenkel-Brunswik and Contemporary Sociologists*, i.e., her encounters with academic sociology in the US. According to Fleck, these were characterized by "the closed-minded attitude of mainstream sociology towards social psychology, which was abandoned after a short interlude in the 1950s when attempts to establish an interdisciplinary field between psychology and sociology finally collapsed." Notably, Robert K. Merton's comments on Else Frenkel-Brunswik's parts of *The Authoritarian Personality* in a memo raise the issue of the relationship between psychology and sociology within her work. The analysis of the memo reflects the arguments (and demarcation lines) developed by Merton, emphasizing the explanatory differences between psychology and sociology.

Also drawing on qualitative parts of *The Authoritarian Personality*, Lucyna Darowska contrasts the findings of Frenkel-Brunswik with selected case studies on Nazi-resisters in her article *How the Fascist and Non-Fascist Self May Develop: Else Frenkel-Brunswik's Qualitative Analyses in "The Authoritarian Personality" and Their Comparison to Studies on Resisters*. She thus brings Frenkel-Brunswik's theorems into dialogue with the current field of "perpetrator studies." With reference to three qualitative case studies, she discusses the question of whether parallels can be drawn between the personality structure of "Low Scorers" in *The Authoritarian Personality* and the personality structure of Nazi-resisters. The studies presented differ essentially according to the consistence and stability of political attitudes dependent on family socialization, milieu affiliation, and socio-political change. Darowska finally points to the "reflective self" that characterizes a robust, undogmatic personality structure.

Subsequently, Peter Schmidt views Frenkel-Brunswik's work from the angle of current quantitative research into authoritarianism, thereby raising the question of the methodological foundations of her work in his paper titled *Logical Positivism or Critical Theory as the Methodological Foundation of "The Authoritarian Personality"*. His article is a methodological examination highlighting the ("invisibilized") key role of Frenkel-Brunswik in conceptualizing *The Authoritarian Personality*. The article also demonstrates how the study's F-Scale was adapted in further research into authoritarianism, and in particular discusses the effects of the idealization of parents on the measurement. Finally, with reference to more recently run tests, it hints at how some of Frenkel-Brunswik's methodological and theoretical ideas might be continued in research on authoritarianism.

The article section is concluded by Claudia Heinrich's contribution *Thriving in Ambiguity—A Dispositive of Self-Optimisation*, focusing on the uses of Frenkel-Brunswik's best-known theorem of the "(in)tolerance of ambiguity" in today's management trends. The author draws a line to current debates (and practices) in human resource development, in which "ambiguity tolerance" has become a skill that supposedly can be trained and a dispositive for self-optimization. Based on a literature review, the author argues that this trend was possible due to shifts in the reception of the term, and the diffusion of a once critical impetus into a management tool. The author points to the fact that while ambiguity tolerance is applied as a requirement for human resource development, the hatred of difference remains strong, and is even increasing.

In the forum section of this Special Issue, we print an interview conducted by the Austrian sociologist Dietmar Paier with Daniel J. Levinson, one of the contributors to *The Authoritarian Personality*, in November 1992 in New Haven, Connecticut.

This Special Issue came out of a symposium hosted in Vienna in July 2021, organized by the Archive for the History of Sociology in Austria at the University of Graz (AGSÖ), which also holds the estate of Else Frenkel-Brunswik, and the Austrian Association for Exile Research (öge), supported by the Section for the History of Sociology within the Austrian Sociological Association (ÖGS).⁹ The Special Issue publishes some of the contributions to this conference. We want to express our gratitude for the funding of this conference as well as of this Special Issue to the Zukunftsfonds der Republik Österreich (Future Fund of the Republic of Austria), the Nationalfonds der Republik Österreich für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus (National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism), the Niederösterreichische Landesregierung – Abteilung Wissenschaft und Forschung (Department for Science and Culture, Office of the Federal Government of Lower Austria), and the Stadt Wien Kultur (Department of Culture, City of Vienna), and to Katrin Sippel for managing these funds on behalf of the Austrian Association for Exile Research (öge). Our particular thanks also go to many the colleagues who supported this publication and the earlier conference, among them (in alphabetical order) Emily Abbey, Mitchell Ash, Maria Czwik, Christian Dayé, Oliver Decker, Linda Erker, Stanley Feldman, Angela Kindervater, Robyn Marasco, Marietta Mayrhofer-Deak, Barbara Rothmüller, and Karin Stögner, as well as the reviewers of the contributions, and our copyeditor Joanna White.

We wish to conclude this introduction with some disciplinary remarks. The list of participants at our original 2021 symposium revealed a variety of disciplines relating in some way or another to the methods and topics Else Frenkel-Brunswik worked on. In our view, this resembles what some scholars have called her “constructive synthesis” (Paier 1996: 39) of different approaches, and at the very least her scientific openness and curiosity.¹⁰ Whether Frenkel-Brunswik was “at home” in every discipline, as Gardner Murphy put it in his foreword to her selected papers, or rather *not* at home in any of them in the best sense of the word, is a question of perspective. Maybe Daniel J. Levinson put it most accurately in his obituary of Else Frenkel-Brunswik: “Finally, she was multidisciplinary in the best sense of the word. She was ready to engage in disciplined search for the relevant, no matter how far it led from her disciplinary origins.”¹¹

⁹ See <https://agso.uni-graz.at/frenkel-brunswik/> for more information on the symposium.

¹⁰ Her scientific openness is also revealed by her readiness to engage in discussions with social scientists holding opposing epistemological views. The Austrian-American philosopher Herbert Feigl organized a symposium on psychoanalysis in December 1953, the two main speakers being Else Frenkel-Brunswik and B.F. Skinner. In a letter to Feigl, she wrote: “The choice of Skinner as the second speaker on the symposium on psychoanalysis seems to me quite a fortunate one. I felt all along that the second speaker should be an intelligent representative of the vast number of scientists who are very critical of psychoanalytic theory and who think that no scientific explanations are really offered by psychoanalysis. I can think of no one whose approach is more opposite to mine than Dr. Skinner’s and at the same time I have great respect for him. Our contrasting views may highlight better the problems involved and lead to a fruitful and interesting discussion.” (Letter by Else Frenkel-Brunswik to Herbert Feigl, 8 October 1953, AGSÖ 25.1.28).

¹¹ Daniel J. Levinson (1967/1968): A biography of Else Frenkel-Brunswik. Preliminary version of an article to appear in the forthcoming International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. [1967/1968] (AGSÖ 25.6.), p. 8.

References

- Adorno, Theodor W., Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford (1950) *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Benetka, Gerhard (2002) Frenkel-Brunswik, geb. Frenkel, in: Keintzel, Brigitte, and Ilse Korotin (eds.) *Wissenschaftlerinnen in und aus Österreich. Leben, Werk, Wirken*. Wien: Böhlau, 190–193.
- Blum, Ben (2018) The Lifespan of a Lie. The most famous psychology study of all time was a sham. Why can't we escape the Stanford Prison Experiment?, <https://gen.medium.com/the-lifespan-of-a-lie-d869212b1f62> (accessed August 22, 2022).
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) L'illusion biographique. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 62–63: 69–72. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1986.2317>.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (2017) The biographic Illusion, in: Saunders, Edward, and Wilhelm Hemecker (Eds.), *Biography in Theory. Key Texts with Commentaries*, 210–216. Berlin: de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110516678-036>.
- Christie, Richard, and Marie Jahoda (1954) *Studies in the Scope and Method of "The Authoritarian Personality"*. *Continuities in Social Research*, Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Fleck, Christian (2011) *A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences. Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research*. London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781849662932>.
- Gordon, Peter E. (2018) The authoritarian personality revisited: Reading Adorno in the age of Trump. In: Brown, Wendy, Peter E. Gordon and Max Pensky (eds.) *Authoritarianism. Three Inquiries in Critical Theory*, 45–84. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heiman, Nanette, and Joan Grant (1974) Introduction, in: Frenkel-Brunswik, Else: *Selected Papers*. Edited by Nanette Heiman and Joan Grant, *Psychological Issues* 8(3), Monograph 3. New York: International University Press, 3–35.
- Hyman, Herbert H., and Paoul B. Sheatsley (1954) "The Authoritarian Personality" – a Methodological Critique, in: Christie, Richard, and Marie Jahoda (eds.) *Studies in the Scope and Method of "The Authoritarian Personality"*. *Continuities in Social Research*, 50–122. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Kranebitter, Andreas, and Christoph Reinprecht (eds.) (2019) *Die Soziologie und der Nationalsozialismus in Österreich*. Bielefeld: transcript. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839447338>.
- Kranebitter, Andreas (2020) Rebels without a cause? 'Criminals' and fascism in The Authoritarian Personality, *Journal of Classical Sociology* 22(3): 257–281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X20978506>.
- Kranebitter, Andreas (2022) Tiefe Oberflächenpsychologie statt oberflächlicher Tiefenpsychologie. Zu Leben und Werk von Else Frenkel-Brunswik, in: Decker, Oliver, Fiona Kalkstein and Johannes Kiess (eds.): *Demokratie in Sachsen. Jahrbuch des Else-Frenkel-Brunswik-Instituts für 2021*, 23–33. Leipzig. Edition Überland.
- Le Texier, Thibault (2018) *Histoire d'un mensonge: Enquête sur l'expérience de Stanford* [History of a Lie: An Inquiry into the Stanford Prison Experiment]. Paris: La Découverte.
- Le Texier, Thibault (2019) Debunking the Stanford Prison Experiment, *American Psychologist* 74(7), 823–839. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000401>.

- Meloen, Jos D. (1991) The Fortieth Anniversary of “The Authoritarian Personality”, *Politics and the Individual* 1(1): 119–127.
- Paier, Dietmar (1996) Einleitung, in: Frenkel-Brunswik, Else: *Studien zur autoritären Persönlichkeit*. Edited by Dietmar Paier (=Bibliothek sozialwissenschaftlicher Emigranten, Band 3), 7–70. Graz; Wien: Nausner & Nausner.
- Perry, Gina (2012) *Behind the shock machine: The untold story of the notorious Milgram psychology experiments*. Brunswick: Scribe.
- Reicher, Stephen D., S. Alexander Haslam, and Joanne R. Smith (2012) Working Toward the Experimenter: Reconceptualizing Obedience Within the Milgram Paradigm as Identification-Based Followership, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 7(4): 315–324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612448482>.
- Reinprecht, Christoph, and Nora Walch (2020) Wiener Verortungen: Eine Analyse der urbanen Verankerung soziologischen Denkens und Forschens. In: Grenz, Tilo, Pfadenhauer, Michaela, and Christopher Schlembach (Eds.) *Kommunikative Wissenskulturen. Theoretische und empirische Erkundungen in Gegenwart und Geschichte*, 24–46. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Roiser, Martin, and Carla Willig (2002) The strange death of the authoritarian personality: 50 years of psychological and political debate, *History of the Human Sciences* 15(4): 71–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695102015004682>.
- Shils, Edward A. (1954) Authoritarianism: “Right” and “Left”, in: Christie, Richard, and Marie Jahoda (1954) *Studies in the Scope and Method of “The Authoritarian Personality”*. *Continuities in Social Research*, 24–49. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Smeulers, Alette (2020) Milgram Revisited: Can we still use Milgram’s ‘Obedience to Authority’ Experiments to Explain Mass Atrocities after the Opening of the Archives? Review Essay, *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 3(1): 216–244. <http://doi.org/10.21039/jpr.3.1.45>.
- Stone, William F., Gerda Lederer, and Richard Christie (eds.) (1993) *Strength and Weakness. The Authoritarian Personality Today*, New York et al.: Springer.

Author biographies

Andreas Kranebitter is the head of the Archive for the History of Sociology in Austria at the University of Graz and one of the managing editors of *Serendipities*.

Christoph Reinprecht is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Vienna.