

**Solovey, Mark and Cravens, Hamilton (eds.), *Cold War Social Science: Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pp. xviii+270. ISBN 978-0-230-34050-3. £55 (hardback)**

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*Cold War Social Science* assembles some of the most compelling voices in the history of social science today. Its unifying problem is to examine how the Cold War engaged American social science. The volume covers a broad range of disciplines with a preference for psychology, sociology and anthropology and their interstices. It opens with David Engerman's study of the Russian Research Center at Harvard University and closes with Marga Vicedo's study of psychoanalytic accounts of motherly love as anti-Communist weaponry. The two bookends encapsulate the book's answer to its set problem.

To most authors in the volume the concept of "Cold War social science" implies the fallacy that the national security establishment set the agenda, methods and uses of social science. In his chapter, Engerman counters the claim by highlighting the mismatch between scholars' interests and outputs and the expectations and the dictates of their paymasters. Social scientists might have taken the Cold War cash but they did not sell themselves. The Cold War as cause must be replaced by the Cold War as context. And even this demotion might not be enough, as we read in the introduction, "sometimes it seems more fruitful to think about ... 'social science in mid-century America' so as not to assume the Cold War context was determinant." (p.15) In the new and preferred reading the Cold War is a cache of rhetorical and conceptual resources on offer to social scientists. The perspective is exemplified in Vicedo's account of how social scientists linked their views on the nature of gender roles to caring for the emotional maturity and stability of the American democratic order. By rejecting the representation of social scientists as puppets in a theatrical contest between global superpowers, the authors in the volume affirm the historical agency of social scientists.

The Cold War becomes subordinate to social science's intellectual projects. In Vicedo's study the Cold War offered shelter to conservatives, but it was also enabling of liberal careers as Nadine Weidman shows in a study of Ashley Montagu's magazine writings on human nature that asserted the emotional and biological superiority of women over men. Michael Bycroft brings to the collection the case of psychologists promoting the study of creativity while rejecting political readings of their insights. Some social scientists inhabited the "grey spaces" of federal research contracting for counter-insurgency, as Joy Rohde labels in her study of American University's Special Operations Research Office. But as we learn from Howard Brick's review of "neo-evolutionist" anthropology, others would deploy similar intellectual resources to campaign for the autonomy of the Third World and to critique westernization. Hamilton Cravens records how the agendas of the most significant streams in social science research were set not in the early postwar years, but in the 1920s and 1930s. Joel Isaac argues that scholars' "commitment to

theorize” at Harvard University’s Department of Social Relations, was indifferent to the urgencies and pragmatism of fighting the war of ideas at home and abroad. Even the institutional settings of “Big Social science” were not a Cold War invention and were marshalled by World War II.

The subtle and sophisticated historicizing of the Cold War advanced in this volume is aligned with recent commentary in American cultural and intellectual history and history of science, notably a 2010 Focus in *Isis*. The reader is cautioned about the meanings and assumptions freighted by “Cold War” turned adjective. I sympathise with the authors’ distress with histories that make the military-industrial-academic complex appear all knowing and all controlling. And yet, like with most virtues, too much subtlety can be bad for you. To assert the agency of the social scientist we must not lose sight of the agency of the cold warriors. The danger is that by construction we lay aside how the American state and anti-Communist hysteria pressured, constrained and offered opportunities for social scientists. That historiography is not yet obsolete. In the volume, chapters by Janet Martin-Nielsen, Kaya Tolon and Edward Jones-Imhotep trace the traffic in anxieties, puzzles and tool kits between the state and social science. And along such conventional lines the emergence of decision and management sciences remains a rewarding research subject, as Hunter Heyck outlines in the volume and as testified by a forthcoming collection of studies by Paul Erickson, Judy L. Klein, Lorraine Daston, Rebecca Lemov, Thomas Sturm and Michael D. Gordin. The sensibility developed in *Cold War Social Science* is best seen as a complement to earlier scholarship, cautioning us against its alluring assumptions of power and domain.

*Cold War Social Science* has just under 250 pages and packs thirteen chapters. Each contribution is brief and reads as a summation or teaser for work that the authors have published or are about to publish. The advanced student and the interested reader will find the book to be a useful roadmap to some great work in the history of social science. Its contribution to scholarship is to sharpen our attention to the limits of the Cold War thematic. It counters narratives of national security state oppression and social science co-option in favor of accounts that situate social science in overlapping institutional environments and traditions, multiple time frames and negotiations between a multitude of actors. Its sober message is worth listening to.

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