

Klaus Holzkamp (1927–1995)

Teo (1998) has proposed that the career of Holzkamp can be divided into four phases. The first phase was the *pre-critical period* which lasted until 1968. Teo called this pre-critical, not because Holzkamp was not yet criticizing the standard scientific approach, because he was not yet involved with what came to be called Critical Psychology. During this period Holzkamp was involved in a critical analysis of the methods and problems of traditional scientific psychology. He felt psychology lacked an adequate philosophy to support the scientific undertaking. In 1964 he concluded that the relationship between theory and experimental procedures in psychology opened the door to multiple interpretations of results. Not only that, psychological theories are such that experiments can be performed that can either support a theory or falsify it, depending on one's purpose. He was not yet criticizing the experimental method though.

During the *critical-emancipatory period* (1968–1972) Holzkamp came under the influence of the student movement in Germany. Students were critical of current psychology and some were calling for its abolition. Rather than just be critical of current psychology, as many students were, Holzkamp began to aspire to formulating a better psychology. It was clear that psychology had nothing to offer the troubling social issues of the day. A concern with the emancipation of people from oppressive circumstances was arising. The period was marked by a questioning of the relevance of psychology to life practices, identifying problems with the traditional methodology, and revealing the implicit or unrecognized ideological assumptions that underlie psychology to that point.

In 1972 Holzkamp wrote *Critical psychology: Preparatory works* and ushered in the third *critical-conceptual period* (1973–1983). During this phase it was recognized that traditional psychology could not solve the problems inherent in the discipline and that there could be no compromise between the mainstream and critical psychological approaches. A wholly new framework was needed. During this period new conceptual schemes were developed and that it had to involve an evolutionary framework (as laid out by Leontiev). It was recognized that psychology would have to draw upon biology, physiology, and ethology, but also anthropology and archaeology. This and the subsequent period (*subject-scientific*, 1983 to Holzkamp's death in 1995) were what were dealt with in the text.

Reference

Teo, T. (1998). Klaus Holzkamp and the rise of and decline of German Critical Psychology. *History of Psychology, 1*, 235–253.