Goodwin Watson was among other things, the first President of the SPSSI (Society of Psychologists for the Study of Social Issues (in 1936); and the founding editor, in 1962 of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences*. He also worked with Kurt Lewin, and was author of any early text on action research (*Action for Unity* 1946). Watson’s pre–war life was one in which he tried to use psychology in the cause of progressive social change. For his pains, he was forced in 1942, as a wartime federal government employee to appear before the Dies Committee (The House UnAmerican Activities Committee, in 1942, pre-McCarthy). Nicholson (1997) argues that Watson’s post-war professional work was a reaction to this experience. Exemplifying, perhaps, Cook’s (1986) concept of anticipatory change, he argues that Watson became an advocate of technocratic social engineering as the primary driver of social change, as opposed to being overtly guided by a left political agenda. This account of a neutralizing of Watson’s radicalism might appear to be endorsed by Robin’s (2001) “Making of the Cold War Enemy”. This shows how the very field of the behavioral sciences was a cold war invention, and emerged as the US military industrial complex sought to use (often very willing) psychologists and social scientists in analysing the Cold War “enemy” and indeed construct that enemy. Robin also argues, though, for a nuanced understanding of individuals engagements with the Cold War, recognizing for example that they change over time and that there was not a single set of homogeneous Cold War institutions and political and social processes. Thus individuals were capable of engaging with one or more dimension of the Cold War effort, but also of rejecting or resisting others. This paper reassesses Goodwin Watson’s post war life on the basis of this more nuanced approach, using Watson’s oral history records to do so. It suggests the need for a more sophisticated understanding of Watson’s activities post WW2, and indeed challenges any assumption that those engaged in the development of the behavioral sciences were wholly anti-left
References

