

“How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives”: Sexuality, Race, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Social Constructionist Thought

Joanne Meyerowitz

Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and others Show how common culture Shapes the separate lives: Matrilineal races Kill their mothers' brothers In their dreams and turn their Sisters into wives. . . .	Slowly we are learning, We at least know this much, That we have to unlearn Much that we were taught, And are growing chary Of emphatic dogmas; Love like Matter is much Odder than we thought.
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—From W. H. Auden, “Heavy Date,” 1939

From the late 1920s into the early 1950s, a loose network of social scientists, known as the “culture-and-personality school,” collaborated in an epistemic shift in social thought that reverberated through the rest of the twentieth century. They explicitly rejected biological theories of race and investigated instead how different “cultures” produced diverse patterns of human behavior. In the past two decades, some historians, including Elazar Barkan, Lee D. Baker, and John P. Jackson, have applauded the liberalism of the culture-and-personality vision of race, while others, including Peggy Pascoe, Daryl Michael Scott, and Alice O’Connor, have critiqued it. In either case, historians agree that the cultural approach shaped the intellectual and legal history of race and the civil rights movement. For example, culture-and-personality theorists had direct and indirect roles in the writing of Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* (1944), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statement on race (1950), and the *Brown v. Board of Education* U.S. Supreme Court decision (1954).¹

Joanne Meyerowitz is a professor of history and American studies at Yale University.

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Readers may contact Meyerowitz at joanne.meyerowitz@yale.edu.

¹ Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge, Eng., 1992), 66–134; Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896–1954* (Berkeley, 1998); John P. Jackson, *Social Scientists for Social Justice: Making the Case against Segregation* (New York, 2001); Peggy Pascoe, “Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of ‘Race’ in Twentieth-Century America,” *Journal of American History*, 83 (June 1996), 44–69; Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880–1996* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, 2002). Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944); United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Statement by Experts on Race Problems,” July 20, 1950, *UNESCO Documents and Publications*, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001269/126969eb.pdf>; *Brown*

What is less well known, perhaps, is that culture-and-personality scholars also addressed many of the other issues of their day, including aggression, fascism, gender roles, criminality, and international relations. In all of these areas, they repudiated or downplayed biological theories of group difference and applied and popularized a culture-and-personality approach. Over several decades, from the late 1920s to the mid-1950s, they tried to explain differences in human behavior by looking to culture and then observing how specific groups transmitted culture from one generation to the next. In so doing, they forged a particular version of social constructionist thought in the mid-twentieth-century United States.

From early on, the culture-and-personality school also had an abiding interest in sexuality. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead, and Ruth Benedict popularized a cultural approach to sexuality and used it to comment on homosexuality. Other scholars then adopted, adapted, and reworked it. Three of them—Otto Klineberg, Ashley Montagu, and Abram Kardiner—can help us trace the conjuncture of race and sex in the culture-and-personality vision. Each of them wrote important popular books on race, in which they applied variants of the culture-and-personality thesis, and each also wrote on sexuality. Sexuality and race were (and are) not equivalent categories, and the culture-and-personality scholars did not pose them as such. Nonetheless, they applied much the same approach to sex, especially homosexuality, that they applied to race. By focusing on the authors who wrote about both race and sexuality, we can begin to explore a metanarrative that reconstituted intellectual thought in multiple domains in the twentieth century. We can show how understandings of race and sexuality developed in tandem, mutually constituted through an emerging theory of “how common culture shapes the separate lives.”² The culture-and-personality writings do not, of course, cover the entire range of cultural or intellectual commentary on race, sexuality, or social constructionism in the mid-twentieth century, but they do allow us to see how twentieth-century social constructionist thought combined and vacillated between a cultural relativism that valued noninvidious distinctions and a concern with health that treated difference as pathology.

They also help us discern the outlines of a distinctive form of biopolitics. For the past two decades, scholars have studied the “biologization” of the social categories of race, gender, and sexuality. Many see the late eighteenth century as a turning point and the nineteenth century as the full flowering of a widespread shift in American and European social thought. In these histories, scientists, in particular, gained new authority as they increasingly classified populations and tied the perceived traits of particular groups to biological moorings. What happened, though, when the biological paradigm began to

v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

² W. H. Auden, “Heavy Date,” 1939, in *Collected Shorter Poems, 1930–1944*, by W. H. Auden (London, 1950), 116. A few recent works have pointed to the interlinked construction of race and sexuality in early and mid-twentieth-century social science, especially in sociological thought. See, for example, Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York, 2001); and Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis, 2004). For recent works that look at other conjoined and overlapping constructions of race and sexuality in modern U.S. history, see, for example, Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, 2000); Lisa Duggan, *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (Durham, 2000); Nayan Shah, “Between ‘Oriental Depravity’ and ‘Natural Degenerates’: Spatial Borderlands and the Making of Ordinary Americans,” *American Quarterly*, 57 (Sept. 2005), 703–25; Julian B. Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880–1940* (Durham, 2007); and Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885–1940* (Chicago, 2009).

fall apart? Historians have paid more attention to eugenics and its increasingly defensive advocates and less attention to the competing biopolitics of twentieth-century social constructionists. In the areas of race and sexuality (and almost everything else), the culture-and-personality scholars called for various kinds of “social engineering,” including a liberal form of biopolitics that would reconfigure a group’s behavior and health by reshaping the personalities of its members. To put it simply, they replaced race with culture and nature with nurture, and in so doing, they rejected eugenics (or the biopolitics of childbearing) and promoted instead a biopolitics of child rearing. “Spanking the baby may be the psychological seed of war,” announced one newspaper article in 1941. The article—on the anthropologist Ashley Montagu—suggested that child rearing practices could increase or reduce aggression, militarism, and racism. The way to enhance the quality of a population was not through selective breeding of so-called races but through selective nurturing of certain cultural traits. “This time,” one critical commentator noted in 1949, “it is not ‘blood’ that predetermines a people’s character, as the Nazi philosophy taught, but methods of rearing children.”³

Two Histories

The standard accounts of the intellectual history of race and homosexuality trace two different histories, or two different genealogies, of the early and mid-twentieth century. That is, the story historians typically tell about race or ethnicity is different from the one usually told about sex. On race, the story, in simplified form, goes like this: In the early twentieth century, the African American civil rights activist and scholar W. E. B. Du Bois and the German-Jewish immigrant anthropologist Franz Boas took the lead in repudiating the dominant racist thought that had posited biology as the key to differences between national, ethnic, and racial groups. Du Bois, Boas, and others emphasized culture rather than race, and in American intellectual circles their position came to predominate by the 1930s and especially during and after World War II. This new position pointed out minor physical differences between so-called races but attributed perceived differences in behavior, traits, or intelligence to culture or environment. It helped discredit, as it intended, the evolutionary vision of the eugenicists (and the Nazis), who considered certain groups inherently inferior. The students of Franz Boas took the lead in this endeavor, along with other social scientists and civil rights activists who had inherited the legacy of Du Bois. They eventually had this cultural emphasis, with its repudiation of most innate group differences, written into policy and law. In most histori-

³ By biopolitics, I refer to policies or policy prescriptions that aimed to manage, regulate, or administer the life and health of populations. This definition is influenced by Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction* (New York, 1978), 133–60. For an interesting account of the eighteenth-century shift toward biological explanations, see Dror Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2004). For a historiographic essay on eugenics, see Frank Dikötter, “Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics,” *American Historical Review*, 103 (April 1998), 467–78. For other recent works on eugenics in the United States, see Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley, 2001); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley, 2002); Nancy Ordover, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 2003); and Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley, 2005). For a book that looks at (non-eugenic) behaviorist “human engineering,” see Rebecca Lemov, *World as Laboratory: Experiments with Mice, Mazes, and Men* (New York, 2005). “Anthropologist Finds Psychological Seed of War in Baby Spanking,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, Jan. 5, 1941, p. 2; David J. Dallin, “Exterminate the Russians?,” *New Leader*, Oct. 29, 1949, p. 2.

cal accounts, this is a story of how liberals fought against racism and eventually helped demolish legalized racial segregation.⁴

On homosexuality, the story has a different narrative arc. In the now-standard intellectual history, Sigmund Freud assumes an early leading role in rejecting the biological theories that had posited homosexuals as physically and inherently different from heterosexuals. In the emerging view, homosexuals were not the constitutionally nervous degenerates or the somatic “third sex” that several late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sexologists had suggested they were. In the early twentieth century, Freud and his followers turned to psychodynamic development as the critical force in creating differences in sexual-object choice. This new position appeared more widely in American scholarly circles in the 1930s and in American popular culture after World War II. Students of Freud, including those who broke with him, played a central part in rejecting biological theories of homosexuality at the same moment that students of Boas helped overturn biological theories of racial difference. But the political valence here differed. Psychoanalysts argued that homosexuality was a psychic disease. In the United States, the orthodox Freudians, the neo-Freudians, and their popularizers all increasingly attributed patterns of adult sexual behavior to early parent-child interactions. For example, homosexuality resulted, in some accounts, when unhealthy mothers smothered or dominated their young children. The psychoanalysts (and their popularizers) pathologized homosexuals (and various others), not as inherently defective or criminal, but as neurotic, immature, unhappy, and maladjusted. In recent historical tellings, this is not a story of liberals fighting injustice; it is, rather, a story of how scholars reformulated and reinforced popular prejudice against an already stigmatized group.⁵

In these parallel histories of race and homosexuality, mid-twentieth-century scholars critiqued earlier studies that had attempted to correlate psychic and behavioral difference with biological metrics, such as brain size, cranial structure, hip width, size of genitals, or quantity of hormones, and in both accounts, these scholars understood group differences as primarily human-made, contingent, and changeable. But even though both histories trace how certain scholars rejected biological explanations, the two narratives feature different causal theories, distinct programs of action, and, in the end, divergent outcomes. In one history, social scientists joined with (and became) activists who applied their cultural arguments to promote intergroup cooperation and racial integration. In the other, psychotherapists used psychological arguments to foist “cures” on homosexuals, whom they construed as neurotic and perverse, and in the postwar years, gay and lesbian activists and their allies increasingly opposed them.

Culture and Personality

The two histories are not wholly incorrect, but they disregard the significant overlap in the mid-twentieth-century intellectual histories of race and sexuality. One critical miss-

⁴ See, for example, Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas, 1963), esp. 409–30; George W. Stocking Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (1968; Chicago, 1982); Carl Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (New York, 1991), 59–211; Barkan, *Race, Racism, and Science: Social Impact and Interaction* (Santa Barbara, 2004).

⁵ See, for example, Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (New York, 1981); Kenneth Lewes, *Psychoanalysis and Male Homosexuality* (1988; Northvale, 1995); and Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago, 1999).

ing link is the culture-and-personality school, which brought together anthropology and psychology, especially Boasian anthropology and neo-Freudian psychoanalysis. The culture-and-personality scholars defined culture as a form of “social inheritance” and then tried to explain how a social inheritance might be transmitted from one generation to the next, that is, how a culture reproduces itself. If not via biology, if not through heredity, then how are children shaped toward (or how do they come to deviate from) the normative behavior of their own societies? The kind of question the culture-and-personality theorists asked repeatedly was, “how does a Chinese baby grow up to be Chinese and not French?” If Chineseness is not an innate characteristic, then what is it and how is it passed on? For the culture-and-personality scholars, child rearing and personality formation were integral parts of the answer to the cultural transmission question. In 1935, the anthropologist Margaret Mead summed up the emerging view: “We are forced to conclude that human nature is almost unbelievably malleable. . . . The differences between individuals . . . are almost entirely to be laid to differences in conditioning, especially during early childhood, and the form of this conditioning is culturally determined.”⁶

The culture-and-personality networks emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s when a few anthropologists began to take an interest in how cultures shape individuals. The anthropologist Edward Sapir, a student of Boas, is often credited as a founding father of the school. In a series of influential essays published in the 1930s, he called for “cultural anthropology and psychiatry” to “join hands.” He asked anthropologists to study individual variation and human interrelationships, and he asked psychiatrists to pay greater attention to the transmission of culture. By writing books for the general public, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead popularized the early culture-and-personality vision. By the 1930s, a handful of psychoanalysts had joined the anthropologists. The German émigrés Karen Horney and Erich Fromm and the American Harry Stack Sullivan emerged as key leaders of the neo-Freudian school that insisted on the importance of culture and environment in psychic development. All of these scholars knew each other. They corresponded and met together at conferences and in seminars, and they clustered in a few institutional centers, including Yale University’s Institute of Human Relations, Columbia University’s Department of Anthropology, and the New York Psychoanalytic Society’s dissident breakaway circles. Many of them—Ruth Benedict, Erich Fromm, Geoffrey Gorer, Karen Horney, Abram Kardiner, Margaret Mead, and Ashley Montagu—wrote popular books that sold to a nonacademic public. Others—Gregory Bateson, John Dollard, Ralph Linton, Cora DuBois, Otto Klineberg, Edward Sapir, and Harry Stack Sullivan—were known best in scholarly circles. Along with other social scientists, they hoped to find a unified theory of human behavior. In this endeavor, they won substantial support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Social Science Research Council.⁷

⁶ Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament* (New York, 1935), 280. For the term “social inheritance,” see, for example, Edward Sapir, “The Race Problem,” *Nation*, July 1, 1925, p. 40. Margaret Mead (and other culture-and-personality scholars) never entirely repudiated the “nature” side of the nature/nurture debate. They did not deny that biology might have some influence on some human behaviors or traits. Mead gave her strongest endorsements to cultural determinism in the late 1920s and 1930s; as many have noted, she retreated from it somewhat in the 1940s and after. Nonetheless, for Mead and her colleagues, human malleability and the primary influence of culture remained the central tenets of the culture-and-personality vision. Theirs was a liberal (not a postmodern) approach: they questioned biological determinism, but they rarely questioned biology or nature itself.

⁷ Edward Sapir, “Cultural Anthropology and Psychiatry,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 27 (Oct.–Dec. 1932), 233. See also Edward Sapir, “The Emergence of the Concept of Personality in a Study of Cultures,” *Journal of Social Psychology*, 5 (Aug. 1934), 408–15; and Edward Sapir, “Why Cultural Anthropology Needs the Psychiatrist,” *Psychiatry*, 1 (Feb. 1938), 7–12. On the culture-and-personality school, see Milton Singer, “A Survey of

In their influence and their public standing, the culture-and-personality scholars stood at the center of an American scholarly elite, but they were hardly representative of it. In an era when most American academics were white, Protestant, native-born, married men, the culture-and-personality networks included a surprising number of immigrants, Jews, women, and people known (to their friends then and to scholars now) as gay or lesbian.⁸ They were outsiders of sorts and internationalists as well, and as such they brought a “deprovincializing” and “cosmopolitan” influence to American social science. Liberal-to-left in their politics, they engaged as public intellectuals with the key controversies of their era, including the debates over immigration, eugenics, and intelligence testing, the rejection of “puritan” ideals, the women’s movement, the failures of capitalism during the Great Depression, and the rise of fascism in Europe. As the historian David Hollinger notes, their vision of “cultural relativism” constituted “a major episode in the intellectual history of the twentieth century, rather than simply another movement within a discipline.”⁹

But the culture-and-personality scholars also had impact well beyond intellectual history. They did not refute, silence, or squelch all biological theories of difference, nor did their popular writings supplant all of the multifarious cultural representations, vernacular knowledge, religious discourse, or activist theorizing on issues of race and sexuality. In fact, they borrowed from liberal and radical critiques of American society at the same time that they shaped them. Nonetheless, they deserve our focused attention because their sustained analyses allow us to listen closely to an emerging conversation on modern social constructionist thought and also because their particular version of social constructionism had substantial influence in the twentieth century. Through their participation in court cases, their work in wartime government agencies, their participation in social

Culture and Personality Theory and Research,” in *Studying Personality Cross-Culturally*, ed. Bert Kaplan (Evanston, 1961), 9–90. For one attempt to spell out the culture-and-personality “unified theory of social science,” see the 1943 article Geoffrey Gorer, “Themes in Japanese Culture,” in *Personal Character and Cultural Milieu: A Collection of Readings*, ed. Douglas G. Haring (Syracuse, 1949), 274–75. For recent historical commentaries, see George W. Stocking Jr., ed., *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality* (Madison, 1986); John S. Gilkeson Jr., “The Domestication of ‘Culture’ in Interwar America, 1919–1941,” in *The Estate of Social Knowledge*, ed. JoAnne Brown and David K. Van Keuren (Baltimore, 1991), 153–74; and Mari Jo Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 85–164.

⁸ Of the core group listed above, the immigrants included the anthropologists Gregory Bateson, Ashley Montagu, and Edward Sapir, the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, the psychoanalyst Karen Horney, and the social psychologist Otto Klineberg. Those of Jewish descent included the British anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer and psychoanalyst Abram Kardiner as well as Fromm, Klineberg, Montagu, and Sapir. The women included the anthropologists Ruth Benedict, Cora DuBois, and Mead as well as Horney. Those who identified as gay and lesbian or who were identified as such by their contemporaries and historians included the psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan as well as Benedict, DuBois, and (with some speculation, then and now) Gorer. Mead had sexual relationships with women as well as men. The most central and best-known figures in the culture-and-personality networks were white, but also involved were a few people of color, including the sociologist and lay analyst Bingham Dai, who was Chinese, and the (male) anthropologist and psychologist Allison Davis, who was African American. The core culture-and-personality figures also worked with, influenced, and were influenced by a wide array of other well-known authors and scholars, including (but not limited to) child development expert and social science impresario Lawrence Frank, anthropologists A. Irving Hallowell, Melville Herskovits, Clyde Kluckhohn, Anthony F. C. Wallace, and John and Beatrice Whiting, political scientist Harold Lasswell, psychoanalysts Erik Erikson, David M. Levy, and Clara Thompson, psychologists Kurt Lewin and Henry Murray, and sociologists E. Franklin Frazier, Charles S. Johnson, and Talcott Parsons.

⁹ I borrow the terms “deprovincializing” and “cosmopolitan” from David Hollinger’s discussion of Jewish intellectuals, including Franz Boas and many of his students. See David A. Hollinger, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton, 1996), 24. David A. Hollinger, *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity: Studies in Ethnoracial, Religious, and Professional Affiliation in the United States* (Madison, 2006), 160–84, esp. 170. See also F. H. Matthews, “The Revolt against Americanism: Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Relativism as an Ideology of Liberation,” *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 1 (Spring 1970), 4–31.

movements, and their popular books and articles, the culture-and-personality scholars had widespread impact in foreign policy, education, child rearing, and social reform. To give just a few examples (not mentioned elsewhere in this essay), their wartime work shaped programs in psychological warfare, their writings on national character influenced the postwar occupation of Japan, and their vision of intercultural cooperation lay at the heart of the late 1940s UNESCO project to reduce international tensions. Their emphasis on (and popularization of) the concept of “culture” contributed to the celebration of diversity in the intercultural education movement of the 1930s and 1940s, the early American studies programs of the 1950s that emphasized American character, and the training of teachers in the Peace Corps in the 1960s and after. Their notions of child rearing informed the emerging fields of child development and family therapy, both of which had a heightened concern with mothering. Culture-and-personality scholars also had direct connections with the pediatrician Benjamin Spock, who wrote the most influential child rearing guides of the twentieth century. And their understanding of culturally constructed “sex roles” reappeared in later writings on gender.¹⁰ In an era when public intellectuals had greater clout than they do today, the culture-and-personality school managed to leave its handprint on an impressive range of social and political issues.

The Cultural Construction of Sexuality

Though some of the culture-and-personality scholars showed more interest in sexuality than others, virtually all of them addressed it in one way or another. In the early twentieth century, the anthropological study of culture and the psychoanalytic study of personality were both already known (even notorious) for their (scandalous) investigations of sexual behavior. When the culture-and-personality school emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s, it generally acknowledged, and provided research to support, the modernist revolt against “sexual repression.” In its popular variant, the modernist rebellion drew on a handful of scholarly works (as well as on various other writings, mass media, and everyday observations). The sexual modernists especially gravitated to Freudian formulations in which sexual repression was seen as the source of neuroses, but they tended to downplay the equally Freudian concept that repression was also the source of “civilization.” Their popular critique also selectively mined ethnographic surveys of “primitive” cultures to highlight by contrast the sexual problems of “civilization.” In this area, the writings of widely read anthropologists, such as Edward Westermarck, may have had as much influence as the works of Freud.¹¹

¹⁰ For works (not yet cited in earlier footnotes) that acknowledge culture-and-personality influence in various areas, see Carleton Mabee, “Margaret Mead and Behavioral Scientists in World War II: Problems in Responsibility, Truth, and Effectiveness,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 23 (Jan. 1987), 3–13; Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, 1995), 17–47; Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 60–62; Diana Selig, *Americans All: The Cultural Gifts Movement* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008), 258–59; Philip Gleason, “World War II and the Development of American Studies,” *American Quarterly*, 36 (no. 3, 1984), 343–58; Jonathan Zimmerman, *Innocents Abroad: American Teachers in the American Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006); Julia Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers* (New Haven, 1998), 219–20; and Deborah F. Weinstein, “Culture at Work: Family Therapy and the Culture Concept in Post-World War II America,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 40 (Winter 2004), 23–46. The first of Benjamin Spock's child rearing books was Benjamin Spock, *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York, 1946).

¹¹ On the modernist sexual revolt, see Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York, 2000); and Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II* (New York, 2009). On sexuality in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-

In the late 1920s, the anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski and Margaret Mead abetted this project with highly popular books that showcased the sexual practices of certain “primitive” groups. In Malinowski’s studies of Trobriand Islanders and in Mead’s work on Samoans, young women and men engaged in various forms of premarital sexual play. The rules that governed their sexual conduct did not include prohibitions on premarital sexual intercourse. Both Malinowski and Mead used the practices of “primitives” to comment on the middle- and upper-class norms of their own societies. Malinowski implicitly applauded the Trobriand Islanders, who had “no condemnation of sex or of sensuality as such,” and contrasted them with the British, whose “repressions of the nursery . . . especially among the higher classes” led to “clandestine inquisitions into indecent things.” Likewise, Mead found that the Samoans’ “knowledge of sex and the freedom to experiment” contributed to their easy “adjustment,” without the adolescent crises or adult neuroses that she thought marked her own society. Although neither disparaged marriage or endorsed “promiscuity,” they both saw benefits in cultures that gave, as Malinowski wrote, “a great deal of freedom and many opportunities for sexual experience.”¹²

For the sexual modernists, Malinowski and Mead offered edifying case studies of alternative sexual customs. In its more popular forms, “romantic cultural exoticism” reversed the hierarchy of evolutionary thought, predominant in the late nineteenth century, in which white “civilized morality” stood above the customs of the dark-skinned “primitives.” By the 1920s, the alleged freedom of “primitives” served as a source of inspiration for those middle- and upper-class Americans and Britons who denounced the constraints of “puritan” and “Victorian” repression. As the renowned sexologist Havelock Ellis wrote in his preface to Malinowski’s *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* (1929), “we may even find that in some respects the savage has here reached a finer degree of civilization than the civilized man.” Almost a decade later, in a telling letter, the editor of the magazine *American Mercury* wrote to Malinowski in a similar vein, inviting him to write a piece on “the respects in which savages are more intelligent in their sexual lives than are highly civilized men and women.” The “savage,” the editor suggested, was “free from inhibitions and neuroses.”¹³

As the words “primitive” and “savage” suggest (and as recent scholars have pointed out), Malinowski and Mead had not abandoned the hierarchical language that helped constitute imperialist ventures. Malinowski made overtly racist comments in his diary, and Mead cast Samoans as simple and shallow and positioned herself as the authority who could explain their exotic ways.¹⁴ Still, Malinowski and Mead had a vision of sexuality

century anthropological writings, see Andrew P. Lyons and Harriet D. Lyons, *Irregular Connections: A History of Anthropology and Sexuality* (Lincoln, 2004). For an influential work, see, for example, Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (London, 1891).

¹² Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (New York, 1927), 77; Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* (New York, 1928), 158; Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* (London, 1929), 200. On Bronislaw Malinowski and Mead, see Lyons and Lyons, *Irregular Connections*.

¹³ George W. Stocking Jr., “Essays on Culture and Personality,” in Malinowski, *Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, ed. Stocking, 7; Havelock Ellis, “Preface,” in *Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia*, by Malinowski, xiii; Paul Palmer to Bronislaw Malinowski, Oct. 30, 1935, Malinowski Correspondence, film no. 129 (microfilm: frame 61, reel 1), Bronislaw Malinowski Papers (Manuscript and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.). An undated ditty on Mead points to the same inverted hierarchy: “Margaret Mead, Margaret Mead/Helps to fill our country’s need/Thinks our culture is much lower/Than the one that’s in Samoa.” Jane Howard, *Margaret Mead: A Life* (New York, 1984), 270.

¹⁴ Francis L. K. Hsu, “The Cultural Problem of the Cultural Anthropologist,” *American Anthropologist*, 81 (Sept. 1979), 571–32; Micaela di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity* (Chicago, 1998);

that differed substantially from the hereditarian and evolutionary theories that placed the colonizers above the colonized. For the anthropologists, sex was not just a natural drive; it was shaped, conditioned, and constructed by cultures. The so-called primitives and savages were not inherently different from Americans or Europeans, their alleged sexual freedom was not a result of innate sexual propensities but culturally conditioned, and their behavior was not necessarily lower or lesser than the sexual behavior of anyone else.

Within the anthropological discussions of sex lay an interest in homosexuality. For many sexual modernists, including Mead, the 1920s were years of sexual experimentation. In her middle- and upper-class professional and literary circles, some women had sexual relationships with women as well as men. She herself had such relationships, including a deep and enduring—and for a time sexual—friendship with her teacher Ruth Benedict. In the interwar years, women's romantic friendships, a staple of nineteenth-century middle-class life, were still understood to be common, especially in women's colleges, but they were increasingly seen as sexual as well as spiritual. With a heightened awareness of "perversion," "mixed [bisexual] types," and "homosexuality," women (and men) reinterpreted the meaning of what they called "crushes." The emerging scientific literature offered few alternatives to the dominant disease model, but at least a handful of commentators cast homosexuality as "a variation of sexuality rather than an extreme abnormality." The anthropological interest in sex reflected these developments. In 1925, when the eminent Franz Boas prepared his student Mead for her fieldwork in Samoa, he directed her to inquiries about adolescence and asked her specifically to pay attention to "crushes among girls."¹⁵

Given the social and intellectual context in which homosexuality was still widely condemned as sinful or perverse, the anthropologists generally endorsed premarital heterosexual intercourse more easily than they endorsed same-sex sexual behavior. The resolutely heterosexual Malinowski, for example, was ambivalent. In an essay written in the late 1920s or early 1930s, he supported less "moral censure" and better treatment of homosexuals in his own society, but he also placed homosexuality on the side of "moral laxity" and promiscuous free love. He worried that homosexuals and unmarried heterosexual free lovers would "infect" others and undermine heterosexual monogamous marriage and reproduction. In his books on the Trobriand Islanders, he posed homosexuality as a western imposition. White imperial rule imposed a separation of the sexes, which created "unnatural conditions of life," as seen "in gaol, on missions stations, and in plantation barracks. . . . The white man's influence and his morality, stupidly misapplied . . . , creates a setting favourable to homosexuality." The Trobriand Islanders, Malinowski also found, had less "nervous excitability" than westerners. Sexual acts other than intercourse, such as fellatio, were for them "preparatory erotic approaches" (foreplay, preceding sexual

Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York, 1999), 158–80. For racist comments by Malinowski, see, for example, Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (Stanford, 1989), 69, 272, 279.

¹⁵ Phyllis Blanchard, "Homosexuality: Ancient and Modern," in *Our Neurotic Age: A Consultation*, ed. Samuel D. Schmalhausen (New York, 1932), 181; Franz Boas to Margaret Mead, July 14, 1925, in *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict*, ed. Margaret Mead (Boston, 1959), 289. On Mead's relationships with women, see Lois W. Banner, *Intertwined Lives: Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Their Circle* (New York, 2003). On the changing meanings of "romantic friendships" in the twentieth century, see Estelle B. Freedman, "'The Burning of Letters Continues': Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality," *Journal of Women's History*, 9 (Winter 1998), 181–200.

intercourse) and had “less tendency to pass into autonomous acts, that is, to develop into perversions, than is the case among more nervously excitable races.”¹⁶

In *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), Mead had a somewhat similar interpretation, in which freer heterosexuality put a damper on permanent homosexuality, and “preparatory” acts did not qualify as “perversion.” But the definitions of who counted as homosexual and what qualified as perversion were still in flux in both the medical literature and popular understanding, and Mead attempted to craft her own understanding of what constituted the abnormal. Mead treated as normal and uneventful those youthful same-sex sexual acts that did not interfere with marriage. According to Mead, homosexual “play” was common in Samoa. (In one of the tables in her book, seventeen out of twenty-five post-pubescent young Samoan women had had “homosexual experience,” while only twelve of the twenty-five had had “heterosexual experience.”) “These casual homosexual relations between girls,” she wrote, “never assumed any long-time importance. . . . they were regarded as a pleasant and natural diversion, just tinged with the salacious.” She distinguished the girls or women involved in such relations from the “real pervert who was incapable of normal heterosexual response.” The bisexual “mixed types” had no “genuine perversion.” Mead saw this “casual” sex as minor, as preparation of sorts that enhanced heterosexuality and marriage. Because Samoans adopted the techniques of same-sex practice (what she called “the secondary variations of sex activity which loom as primary in homosexual relations”) into their heterosexual routines, they did not need, if fixated on such acts, to turn to homosexuality as an adult way of life.¹⁷

In the wake of Malinowski’s and Mead’s popular books, the anthropologist Edward Sapir weighed in on the discussion and expressed his irritation. He had had an affair with Mead that had ended unhappily, even bitterly, in 1926. Soon after she published her book on Samoa in 1928, he published a meandering article, “Observations on the Sex Problem in America.” American culture had indeed restricted sexuality too much, he wrote, but radicals had overreacted in their rejection of their “repressive and unhealthy” past. They had turned, he regretted, to “promiscuity,” and certain unnamed anthropologists had fed the problem by supplying their willing readers with “excited books about pleasure-loving Samoans and Trobriand Islanders.” Sapir not only disliked the advocates of “free love,” he also rejected the emerging minority view that homosexuality was a natural form of sexual expression. “The cult of the ‘naturalness’ of homosexuality,” he wrote, “fools no one but those needing a rationalization of their own problems.” In his published essay, Sapir refrained from using Mead’s name, but in private correspondence with Ruth Benedict, he stated outright that Mead had inspired his essay on sex. As Lois Banner and other biographers have confirmed, Benedict, Mead, and Sapir had a fraught triangular relationship. In the early to mid-1920s, Benedict had an intense friendship with Sapir during the last years of his first wife’s terminal illness, and before his affair with Mead, and later in the 1920s, she had her own sexual relationships with Mead and other women. When Sapir lambasted the modern woman’s sexual behavior, Benedict saw in it a criticism of herself. She shared her suspicions with Sapir, who replied, “you were never once in my thoughts

¹⁶ Bronislaw Malinowski, “Aping the Ape; Or, an Anthropologist Looks at the Modern World from His Primitive Cave-Dwelling,” in *Sex, Culture, and Myth*, ed. Bronislaw Malinowski (New York, 1962), 112, 111; Malinowski, *Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia*, 398, 401–2. On Malinowski’s heterosexuality, see Michael W. Young, *Malinowski: Odyssey of an Anthropologist, 1884–1920* (New Haven, 2004).

¹⁷ Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, 285, 147–49. For more on Mead’s views of sexuality in this book, and in her other books from the early 1930s, see Maureen A. Molloy, *On Creating a Usable Culture: Margaret Mead and the Emergence of American Cosmopolitanism* (Honolulu, 2008).

when I wrote the paper on sex.” Mead “and a lot of drivel in her letters,” he confessed, had prompted his antagonistic stance: “She is hardly a person to me at all. . . . but a symbol of everything I detest most in American culture.”¹⁸

Despite the animosity, there was some consensus. With Malinowski and Mead, Sapir rejected “promiscuity” but did not object to premarital sexual intercourse. He also agreed that culture constructed sexuality. In his 1928 essay, he noted that much “modern psychiatric writing seems almost deliberately to ignore the cultural point of view.” Sex, like everything else, could be understood only in its “historically determined cultural setting.” In a more influential article, published in 1932, Sapir supplied another piece of the relativist puzzle. He directly questioned psychiatric understandings of the normal. “Cultural anthropology,” he suggested, “has the healthiest of all skepticisms about the validity of the concept ‘normal behavior.’ . . . Cultural anthropology . . . is valuable because it is constantly rediscovering the normal.” What was normal in one culture was not necessarily normal in another.¹⁹

It was Benedict who brought the pieces together. Increasingly estranged from her husband, she eventually separated from (but never divorced) him and came to see herself as a lesbian. In the early 1930s, she set up household with a woman but continued to use the title “Mrs.,” which cloaked her domestic arrangements with her marital status. She remained acutely aware of the stigma associated with homosexuality, and she addressed her concerns in her scholarship.²⁰ She also used her anthropological studies to comment, sometimes obliquely, on other social issues. Politically, Benedict stood further to the left than Malinowski, Mead, or Sapir. Like many leftists of the 1930s, she disliked the aggression that led to war, the racial hierarchies that subordinated immigrants and people of color, the rampant competition that she saw as the basis of capitalist inequities, and the social rejection of nonconformists of various stripes. Through anthropological case studies she suggested that cultures could be valid and viable with alternative social arrangements.

On sexuality, she made her major theoretical moves in her article “Anthropology and the Abnormal,” which the *Journal of General Psychology* accepted for publication in 1932 and published in 1934. Here she countered the predominant view that homosexuality was always abnormal. As Sapir had suggested elsewhere, normality was relative. In other cultures, Benedict wrote, “our abnormal”—people considered abnormal in the United States—“function at ease and with honor, and apparently without danger or difficulty to the society.” Benedict illustrated her point with three examples—people who fall into

¹⁸ Edward Sapir, “Observations on the Sex Problem in America,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 8 (Nov. 1928), 519–34, esp. 522–23, 529; Edward Sapir to Ruth Benedict, April 29, 1929, mimeographed edited copy, Correspondence with Ruth Benedict folder, Edward Sapir Papers (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.). The version of this letter at the American Philosophical Society includes sentences left out of the published version in Mead, ed., *Anthropologist at Work*, 195–96. On Benedict’s relationships, see especially Banner, *Intertwined Lives*; Hilary Lapsley, *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women* (Amherst, 1999). On Benedict and Sapir, see also Regna Darnell, *Edward Sapir: Linguist, Anthropologist, Humanist* (Berkeley, 1990), 172–83. For Mead’s and Malinowski’s responses to Sapir’s 1928 article, see Margaret Mead, “Jealousy: Primitive and Civilised,” in *Woman’s Coming of Age: A Symposium*, ed. Samuel D. Schmalhausen and V. F. Calverton (New York, 1931), 41; Malinowski, “Aping the Ape,” 98.

¹⁹ For more on Sapir’s views on premarital sex, see “Affairs’ Based on Love Preferred to an Early Marriage,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 7, 1931, p. 3. Sapir, “Observations on the Sex Problem in America,” 520; Sapir, “Cultural Anthropology and Psychiatry,” 229–42, esp. 235. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, other cultural commentators also noted how the “norm” depended on local custom. For a humorous example, see James Thurber, “Freud: Or the Future of Psychoanalysis,” in *Whither, Whither, or after Sex, What? A Symposium to End Symposiums*, ed. Walter S. Hankel (New York, 1930), 123–24.

²⁰ Banner, *Intertwined Lives*; Lapsley, *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict*. On Benedict’s life and work, see also Judith Schachter Modell, *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life* (Philadelphia, 1983).

trances, homosexuals, and paranoiacs—and carefully cushioned homosexuality between her lengthier treatment of the other two. In “our culture,” she wrote, homosexuality “exposes an individual to all the conflicts to which all aberrants are always exposed.” If homosexuals appeared “incompetent,” it was not because of their homosexuality but because “the culture asks adjustments of them that would strain any man’s vitality.” In cultures in which “homosexuality has been given an honorable place . . . those to whom it is congenial have filled adequately the honorable rôles society assigns them.” Such a “congenial” trait might be congenital or conditioned in early childhood, but in either case, if the culture “accorded [it] prestige” and did not treat it with “social contempt or disapproval,” it belonged, in that time and place, to the category of the “normal.” Second, Benedict claimed that societies molded their members to fit “the fashion of that culture.” Like other traits and behaviors, sexual expression was culturally constructed. “Most individuals,” she wrote, “are plastic to the moulding force of the society into which they are born.” In societies that valued homosexuality, more people would be homosexual. “The majority of mankind,” though not quite everyone, “readily take any shape that is presented to them.” And, finally, she made a plea for accepting the outsiders, the few resistant individuals who failed to conform to the strictures of their culture. “The inculcation of tolerance and appreciation in any society toward its less usual types is fundamentally important in successful mental hygiene.”²¹

As others have noted, Benedict’s version of relativism did not require her to suspend her own judgments about what constituted mental health. She left open the possibility that “absolute categories of abnormal psychology” could in some way be discerned. She expressed distaste, for example, for the individualist self-seeking and self-aggrandizing ethos of her own society, which she saw as unhealthy. “Western civilization,” she wrote, “allows and culturally honors gratifications of the ego which according to any absolute category would be regarded as abnormal.” That critique captured her socialist sympathies, and it also may have served as a dig at various men, including Edward Sapir, whom she described, in private correspondence, as egotistical. In her article, she wrote of the “unbridled and arrogant egoists,” who were “probably mentally warped to a greater degree than many inmates of our institutions.” (Of Malinowski, she wrote in a 1933 letter, “He is one of the most annoying individuals . . . vain to the point where any respectable culture would have to lock him in a madhouse.”) She called ultimately for “social engineering” that recognized that “our local normalities” were not “universal sanities.” Her relativism allowed her to question what she perceived as “western” values and hint at a route to reform. “No society,” she wrote in her essay, “has yet . . . attempted rationally to deal with its own social process of creating new normalities within its next generation.”²² Notably, Benedict did not present a method for how to change the understanding of normality in the next generation. She (and other culture-and-personality scholars) had not yet fully worked out their ideas on how culture was transmitted and therefore how it might be changed.

Benedict revised “Anthropology and the Abnormal” and expanded its discussion of homosexuality in the final chapter of her acclaimed book *Patterns of Culture* (1934). The

²¹ Ruth Benedict, “Anthropology and the Abnormal,” *Journal of General Psychology*, 10 (Jan. 1934), 59–80, esp. 60, 64, 73, 74, 75.

²² *Ibid.*, 75, 76–77; Benedict to Ruth Underhill, May 3, 1933, file 8, box 34, Ruth Benedict Papers (Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Libraries, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.). On Benedict’s intense relationship with Sapir in the 1920s and her irritation with him in the 1930s, see Banner, *Intertwined Lives*; and Darnell, *Edward Sapir*, 172–83.

book provided a primer on the diversity of cultures, cultural relativism, and the plasticity of human behavior. Like her mentor Boas and his other students, Benedict argued against biological determinism and for the “immensely important rôle of culturally conditioned behavior” in shaping individual personality and group ethos. She repudiated hierarchic notions of races and looked instead for local cultural “configurations,” patterns, or gestalts that had developed historically and now characterized the behavior of particular “primitive” peoples. In three case studies—of the Zuni of New Mexico, Dobu of northwestern Melanesia, and Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island—she depicted cultures that allegedly emphasized pleasantness and sobriety, treachery and fear, and rivalry and shame, respectively. In Benedict’s hand, some cultural groups (the Dobu, for example) seem decidedly more malevolent than others; nonetheless, each culture, she found, had its own vitality and validity. In the final chapter, “The Individual and the Pattern of Culture,” she returned to the relativity of normality and to her defense of homosexuals and other “abnormals.” If each culture encouraged only “a segment of the great arc of potential human purposes and motivations,” what happened to the “aberrants” whose behavior fell outside the local norm? In American society, she looked to the future for “tolerance and encouragement of individual difference” and criticized the conformist fear of “eccentricity.” The book had an immediate impact in anthropological circles and outside of them. As Benedict noted in a letter, she had written the book “for a more general audience.”²³ It brought her views on sexuality to a wider public than her article, published in a scholarly journal, could possibly have reached.

The writings of Malinowski, Mead, Sapir, and Benedict laid the foundation for the early culture-and-personality understanding of sex. In later years they would modify their positions, in mostly subtle ways, but their enduring stance, evident by the early 1930s, was that cultures shaped the sexual behavior of their members, that all cultures regulated sexual expression, and that some forms of regulation were more damaging to personalities than were others. In the United States (for Mead, Sapir, and Benedict) and in Britain (for Malinowski), the repression of sexuality created psychological problems. For all of them, culture influenced both the prevalence of homosexuality and the attitudes toward it. When a culture devalued homosexuality, it might appear anyway because of inborn temperament, gender segregation, social trends, imperial incursions, or early childhood experience. For Mead and Benedict, same-sex sexual behavior was not necessarily abnormal. For Benedict in particular, homosexuals were not lesser or inferior or mentally deficient unless the stress caused by social disapproval made them so. Cultures should, she suggested, accept and value their “abnormals,” and “abnormals” themselves should “realize” that the source of their “misery” was not their abnormal practices but their “despair at . . . [the] lack of social backing.”²⁴

“The Cultural Approach” in the 1930s: Otto Klineberg

In 1935, a year after Benedict published *Patterns of Culture*, Otto Klineberg brought her culture-and-personality approach to sexuality together with the culture-and-personality

²³ Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, 1934), 20, 237, 273. Benedict to Alfred A. Knopf, Aug. 25, 1932, file 5, box 2, Benedict Papers.

²⁴ Benedict, “Anthropology and the Abnormal,” 75. On sociologists who were addressing homosexuality around the same time, see Chad Heap, “The City as a Sexual Laboratory: The Queer Heritage of the Chicago School,” *Qualitative Sociology*, 26 (Winter 2003), 457–87.

school's strongest arguments on the cultural construction of race. Klineberg was a prominent scholar, a social psychologist best known in his day for his work on intelligence testing (and still well-remembered today in the discipline of psychology). Born in Quebec in 1899, he grew up in Montreal, the child of Jewish immigrant parents (although he later became a Quaker). After earning a medical degree, he entered the doctoral program in psychology at Columbia University. In 1925, just before he started his graduate career, he took a summer session course titled "Culture and Personality," taught by Edward Sapir. Soon Klineberg joined the emerging culture-and-personality networks. He took courses with Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, he attended parties at Boas's home, he read widely in anthropology, and, as he did, he came to a new appreciation of cultural diversity. "It came," he said later, "almost as a religious revelation to me, to realize that we couldn't really speak of human behavior if we understood only the behavior of people in our own environment, brought up in the same way that we were. . . . I developed this interest in cultural and social factors in personality development." Along with other students of Boas, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Klineberg conducted studies that undermined the earlier view that intelligence testing revealed an inherent racial hierarchy. In Washington State he studied Yakima Indians; in France, Germany, and Italy he studied the so-called Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean races; and in New York City and the U.S. South he studied African Americans. He found repeatedly that environment played the critical role in shaping intelligence.²⁵

Klineberg summarized the new literature on race in *Race Differences* (1935). In the 1930s, this book was the preeminent work in the United States challenging the biology of racial difference. Klineberg dedicated it to Boas, "whose teaching made this book possible." He stated his argument in the preface: "there is no adequate proof of fundamental race differences in mentality . . . those differences which are found are in all probability due to culture and social environment." He then went on chapter by chapter to discredit earlier studies that had argued for innate racial differences in intelligence, personality, criminality, and mental health. In the end, he rejected any attempt to delineate a hierarchy of races, and he spoke out against laws that restricted immigration by national origin and those that prohibited interracial marriage.²⁶

What is less well known is that *Race Differences* was also a manifesto for a new way of thinking about human difference more generally. The last third of the book—part 3, titled "The Cultural Approach"—went beyond the issue of race to lay out the central tenets of the culture-and-personality school. Here Klineberg emphasized the cultural causes of variability in human behavior. Differences in styles of parenting, aggressiveness, acquisitiveness, emotional expression, and gender roles—all were caused by culture. Different cultures had different rules, different attitudes, and different concepts of right and wrong.

²⁵ "The Reminiscences of Otto Klineberg," interview by Robert Rieber, 1984, p. 10, transcript, Columbia University Oral History Project (Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.). For more on Klineberg's life and career, see Otto Klineberg, "Otto Klineberg," in *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*, ed. Gardner Lindzey (9 vols., Englewood Cliffs, 1930–2007), VI, 163–82; Bruce Lambert, "Otto Klineberg, Who Helped Win '54 Desegregation Case, Dies at 92," *New York Times*, March 9, 1992, p. B6; Benjamin Harris, "Klineberg, Otto," *American National Biography Online*, <http://www.anb.org/articles/14/14-01080.html>; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 135–38; and Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 179–86.

²⁶ Otto Klineberg, *Race Differences* (New York, 1935), vii.

Group differences resulted from what Klineberg called (borrowing from Benedict) “the molding influence of culture.”²⁷

In his elaboration of “the cultural approach,” Klineberg addressed sexuality, and here, too, he summarized the prevailing views of those in his intellectual circle. All cultures restricted and regulated “sex behavior,” he said, but they did so in varying ways. Some cultures valued what other cultures decried. Some cultures (he mentioned “many North American Indian tribes” and the Siberian Chukchi) conferred power and “social acceptance,” for example, on homosexuals. “The extent of homosexuality in a community,” he wrote, “is dependent partly, if not entirely, on cultural attitudes.” Races were not innately “promiscuous or puritanical,” and different cultures drew different lines between the normal and the abnormal. In this discussion of sexuality, he borrowed heavily from the works of Malinowski, Mead, Sapir, and Benedict. Like them, he believed that culture shaped the sexual behavior of the individual and that cultures had different definitions of what constituted the abnormal. Like Malinowski, Mead, and others, he suggested that the repression of sexual expression could lead to neuroses, “torment and disturbance.” And like Benedict, he suggested that homosexuality occurred more frequently in those cultures that valued it.²⁸

Klineberg was not a Freudian. Like Malinowski and most other anthropologists, he doubted the universality of the oedipal complex, but he nonetheless borrowed from psychoanalysis when he expressed interest in the possibility that early childhood interactions created adult personality. Different cultures with different child rearing techniques, thus, produced different kinds of adults. But Klineberg was more inclined toward the culture side of the culture-and-personality equation. His vision of homosexuality was not the psychoanalytic one. He did not pose homosexuality as a neurosis, perversion, or mental disturbance, which was the prevalent psychoanalytic position. The meaning of the behavior depended on the culture. “It is culture,” he wrote, “that can make the same form of behavior taboo in one society and apparently indispensable in another.” Like Benedict, he suggested that “differences between individuals” in the same culture might result from either “constitutional factors” or “early experience and conditioning.” But either way, he was interested in same-sex sexual behavior primarily as a sign of cultural diversity. “A deviant in one community” he wrote, would be “perfectly normal or even a superior person in another. . . . There is, therefore, no abnormality as such; there is simply deviation from the accepted pattern, whatever that may be.”²⁹

This position—pioneered by Benedict, adopted by Klineberg—included a pointed critique of the concept of normality and especially questioned psychiatry, with its categorical proclamations of what was normal and abnormal. It made its way into other accounts of sexuality and abnormality in the 1930s and 1940s as anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts drew on it. An article in a sociology journal in 1941 concluded, “as a broad proposition” it was “readily accepted by other social scientists” (and it also “troubled the psychiatrists”).³⁰ It was readily accepted, too, by Alfred

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 272, 274, 308. On the relativity of abnormality, Klineberg cited and was influenced by Sapir, “Cultural Anthropology and Psychiatry.”

²⁹ Klineberg, *Race Differences*, 274, 290–91. See also Otto Klineberg, *Social Psychology* (New York, 1940), 508–9. In the latter book, Klineberg suggests that some conditions might be abnormal in all contexts, but he explicitly excludes homosexuality from the universally abnormal.

³⁰ On the history of the concept of normality, see Carter, *Heart of Whiteness*. Julian Carter, though, does not address the challenges posed by the numerous commentators, including Benedict, Sapir, and Klineberg, who critiqued

Kinsey and his colleagues, who turned to what they called a “cultural interpretation” to dispute what many considered to be the universal abnormality and mental illness of those who engaged in “non-conformant sexual behavior.”³¹ And it was also adopted by some gays and lesbians, including W. H. Auden, whose poem opens this essay. In intellectual circles at least, then, an alternative nonbiological discourse on the relativity of “abnormality” complicated and countered the pathologizing psychoanalytic view. In its inaugural moments, “cultural relativism” spoke directly and self-consciously to and about issues of sexuality.

Culture and Abnormality in the 1940s: Ashley Montagu

But after the mid-1930s, the culture-and-personality school moved in a different direction. By the late 1930s, psychoanalysis had had more impact on American social science in general and on the culture-and-personality school in particular. The anthropologists who founded the school cooperated increasingly with renegade neo-Freudian psychoanalysts, such as Karen Horney and Harry Stack Sullivan, who had taken an interest in how culture and environment create neurotic conflicts, and they also learned of (and from) the Marxist-Freudian German émigrés who reconstituted the Frankfurt School at the New School in New York. The culture-and-personality anthropologists, the Frankfurt School émigrés, and the neo-Freudians all looked to early childhood interactions to show how culture shaped psychic development. Before he broke with the Frankfurt School in 1938, Erich Fromm helped link the different scholarly circles through his connections to German refugees, American psychoanalysts, and other intellectuals in New York City. By 1944, one participant in the culture-and-personality circles remarked on the “greatly intensified collaboration of anthropology and psychiatry.” This “intensified collaboration” was a hallmark of the culture-and-personality school. Outside of the culture-and-personality networks, most anthropologists had only minor interest in psychiatry or psychology; they wrote about “cultures” but not necessarily about early childhood interactions or individual personality formation. For their part, most psychiatrists focused on clinical case studies and therapeutic treatment and showed little if any concern with cultural diversity or the impact of culture on personality.³²

The rise of fascism profoundly shaped collaboration in the culture-and-personality school, especially after 1933 when the Nazis took power in Germany. It literally sent psy-

“normality” from early on. Leonard S. Cottrell and Ruth Gallagher, “Important Developments in American Social Psychology during the Past Decade,” *Sociometry*, 4 (May 1941), 119, 121. See also George Devereux, “Maladjustment and Social Neurosis,” *American Sociological Review*, 4 (Dec. 1939), 844–51; Alfred L. Kroeber, “Psychosis or Social Sanction,” *Character and Personality*, 8 (1940), 204–15; Clellan Ford, “Sexual Behavior among Primitive Peoples,” in *About the Kinsey Report: Observations by 11 Experts on “Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,”* ed. Donald Porter Geddes and Enid Curie (New York, 1948), 26–35; Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach, *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* (New York, 1951); John P. Foley Jr., “The Criterion of Abnormality,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 30 (Oct.–Dec. 1935), 279–91; Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York, 1937), 13–29; Karl M. Bowman, “The Challenge of Sex Offenders: Psychiatric Aspects of the Problem,” *Mental Hygiene*, 22 (Jan. 1938), 10–20; Henry J. Wegrocki, “A Critique of Cultural and Statistical Concepts of Abnormality,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 34 (April 1939), 166–78; Joseph Wortis, “Sex Taboos, Sex Offenders, and the Law,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 9 (July 1939), 554–64; and Clara Thompson, “Changing Concepts of Homosexuality in Psychoanalysis,” in *A Study of Interpersonal Relations: New Contributions to Psychiatry*, ed. Patrick Mullahy (New York, 1949), 214–15. See also Terry, *American Obsession*, 279–81, 284–85.

³¹ Alfred C. Kinsey et al., “Concepts of Normality and Abnormality in Sexual Behavior,” in *Psychosexual Development in Health and Disease*, ed. Paul H. Hoch and Joseph Zubin (New York, 1949), 28. See also Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia, 1948), 202.

³² Clyde Kluckhohn, “The Influence of Psychiatry on Anthropology in America during the Past One Hundred Years,” in *One Hundred Years of American Psychiatry*, ed. American Psychiatric Association (New York, 1944), 609.

choanalysis to the United States (and elsewhere), as Freudians fled Germany and Austria, and it also posed a daunting challenge to those who leaned toward the relativist position. For the refugees and for American liberals and leftists, Nazi Germany became the primary source for and the critical sign of a damaged (and damaging) culture. Some of the anthropologists (Benedict, for example) could barely disguise their distaste for cultures that fostered violence, militarism, racism, and rampant competition, but when the Nazis rose to power, many culturalists gave up even the pretense of tolerance and engaged in direct campaigns to expose and defeat fascism. In this way, fascism threw a wrench into the relativist machinery and pushed the culturalists—who usually claimed that all cultures were valid and valued—to denounce at least one. It also pushed them to use ethnography to examine industrialized nations, to ask how German culture had promoted the shocking Nazi rise to power, and to study “racial prejudice” as well as race differences. As early as 1936, Benedict noticed that “the German exiles” of the Frankfurt School and the social psychologist Kurt Lewin, among others, had begun to study family life in German culture. “There is certainly a need,” she wrote, “for careful work on the cultural conditioning of groups within western civilization.”³³

Fascist Germany posed the ultimate test case that undermined relativism, but the United States, too, inspired concern. In the early and mid-1930s, social commentators suggested that the United States was a “sick society” in need of cure. The 1932 anthology *Our Neurotic Age* and Karen Horney’s 1937 book *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, for example, pointed to cultural contradictions, pressures, and tensions that seemed particularly damaging to Americans’ psychic health. In his widely read article “Society as the Patient” (1936), Lawrence K. Frank wrote, “There is a growing realization among thoughtful persons that our culture is sick, mentally disordered, and in need of treatment.” In the midst of the Great Depression, Frank showed surprisingly little interest in the economy; he asked his readers instead to understand “crime, mental disorders, family disorganization, juvenile delinquency, prostitution and sex offenses” as “human reactions to cultural disintegration.” The “conception of culture and personality,” he wrote, “offers some promise of help.” With it, Frank suggested, scholars could turn to exploring “how culture can be revised.” Instead of positioning all cultures as equally valuable, Frank and others suggested that some cultures were more damaged (and damaging) than others and, therefore, in need of change.³⁴

But where did the cultural problem lie? In one widespread formulation (simplified here), parents—with the blessings of their culture—repressed their children, which caused frustration in early childhood, which in turn caused aggression and neurosis in adult citizens. This formula could be used to explain social ills in various cultures. In one common variation, authoritarian German fathers repressed their children who then grew up to be fascists and racists; in another, smothering American mothers reared delinquent or homosexual sons. As one commentator noted, “The clinging mother is the great emotional menace in American psychological life, the counterpart to the domineering father in England and on the Continent.”³⁵

³³ On Benedict’s ambivalent relativism, see Elgin Williams, “Anthropology for the Common Man,” *American Anthropologist*, 49 (Jan.–March 1947), 84. Benedict to Joseph K. Folsom, Dec. 24, 1936, file 8, box 4, Benedict Papers.

³⁴ Schmalhausen, ed., *Our Neurotic Age*; Horney, *Neurotic Personality of Our Time*; Lawrence K. Frank, “Society as the Patient,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 42 (Nov. 1936), 335, 336, 338, 342. On the impact of fascism on cultural relativism, see Matthews, “Revolt against Americanism,” 22–23.

³⁵ On the frustration-aggression thesis, see, for example, John Dollard et al., *Frustration and Aggression* (New

With Ashley Montagu, we can see the impact of the psychoanalytic turn and the retreat from relativism. In the 1940s, Montagu, an anthropologist, argued for the cultural causes of both race and sexuality differences, but he had also absorbed the now-prevalent psychoanalytic vocabulary. Montagu was born in 1905 in a working-class Jewish immigrant home in London's East End, although he failed to mention—and sometimes lied about—his origins through much of his adult life. His birth name was Israel Ehrenberg, which he changed to the undeniably pretentious Montague Francis Ashley Montagu and later shortened to the still-pretentious Ashley Montagu. In the 1920s, he studied physical anthropology in London. He then moved to the United States and earned his doctorate at Columbia University, where, like Otto Klineberg, he studied with Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict. He taught at New York University and the Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia and then went to Rutgers University in 1949 where he served as chair of the anthropology department for six years. At Rutgers, his prickly demands for university funding and his left-leaning politics combined to earn him enemies. In 1955 he resigned at the urging of the university. As one of his friends acknowledged (in a letter of recommendation, no less), Montagu had “considerable facility in annoying people,” but he was charming when he chose to be. In the mid-1950s, out of work and in need of funds, he turned on the charm. He became a full-time (and famous) public intellectual, writing numerous popular books and appearing on radio and television shows, where he took on the persona of the urbane, humane, and witty British-bred professor. He was a contestant on the *\$64,000 Question* quiz show (he won \$32,000) and in the 1960s a frequent guest on the *Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson.³⁶

Montagu was a popularizer par excellence, who broadcast the existing scholarship as much as he innovated it. Like Klineberg, he won his first fame for his publications on race, starting in the late 1930s, and culminating with his best-selling book, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, first published in 1942. Montagu argued against the traditional static taxonomies of race, against conceptions of racial hierarchy, against the American “caste” system based on race, and against racial prejudice. Along with a handful of progressive biologists of his day, he advocated replacing the biologically freighted concept of “race” with the term “ethnic group.” After World War II, he drafted the liberal UNESCO statement on race, a project on which Klineberg worked as well. Montagu was also a prolific commentator on gender from the 1940s on. In 1940 he published an early statement, influenced by Mead, on culture as the source of psychic differences between the sexes, and in 1946 he drew parallels between “anti-feminism and race prejudice.” In 1952 he published a controversial article, “The Natural Superiority of Women,” in the *Saturday Review*, and the next year he published an expanded book-length version of the essay, under the same title. In his work on gender, as in his writings on race, he brought together his training in physical and cultural anthropology. He discussed physical differ-

Haven, 1939). Geoffrey Gorer, *The American People: A Study in National Character* (New York, 1948), 64. On German fathers and American mothers, see also Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, “Notes on the Mother Rôle in the Family Group,” *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 4 (1940), 132–48.

³⁶ Clyde Kluckhohn to Carl S. Joslyn, May 7, 1943, Clyde Kluckhohn file, Correspondence Series I, Ashley Montagu Papers (American Philosophical Society). On Montagu, see Susan Sperling, “Ashley Montagu (1905–1999),” *American Anthropologist*, 102 (Sept. 2000), 583–88; Susan Sperling, “Ashley’s Ghost: McCarthyism, Science, and Human Nature,” in *Anthropology at the Dawn of the Cold War: The Influence of Foundations, McCarthyism, and the CIA*, ed. Dustin M. Wax (London, 2008), 17–36; Anthony Ramirez, “Ashley Montagu, 94, Anthropologist and Popular Author,” *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1999, p. A23; and Ann T. Keene, “Montagu, Ashley,” *American National Biography Online*, <http://www.anb.org/articles/14/14-01120.html>.

ences between women and men, and he increasingly portrayed women, especially mothers, as essentially more humane and less selfish than men. But he also returned repeatedly to the cultural construction of gender roles and argued against long-standing myths of women's inferiority. Montagu also wrote about homosexuality, especially in an article on the first Kinsey volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948). In the wake of the Kinsey report, the mass media called on various experts, including culture-and-personality figures, to offer commentary. Margaret Mead participated in a symposium and published her comments, Ruth Benedict spoke on the radio, and Erich Fromm wrote an essay. Montagu's contribution appeared (along with Fromm's) in *About the Kinsey Report: Observations by 11 Experts on "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male"* (1948).³⁷

In the 1940s Montagu, like Benedict and Klineberg before him, helped popularize the cultural argument. In 1942 in his book on race, he wrote: "If we agree that mankind is everywhere plastic, adaptable and sensitive, then we can only account for the mental and cultural differences between the varieties of mankind on the basis of a difference in experience." He saw "no reason to believe" that differences among ethnic groups in "temperament, intellectual attitudes, and cultural behavior" were "inborn." In 1948, in his article "Understanding Our Sexual Desires," he made similar statements regarding sexuality. He found "that how a person behaves sexually is largely determined not by inborn factors but by learning." "Homosexuality," he wrote, "is practically always an effect of certain types of cultural experience or conditioning." Like Klineberg, then, Montagu used cultural assumptions to argue against biological determinism, but he drew different conclusions in the domain of race than in the domain of sex. On race, he wanted to minimize but not obliterate group differences. In *Man's Most Dangerous Myth*, he called for recognizing the "likenesses," what he called "the essential unity in all mankind."³⁸ He embraced a classic humanist argument, but like most anthropologists, he could not dismiss the value of cultural variety. His approach to sexuality, however, differed. Even though sexual variation (like ethnic or cultural variation) was, in his view, a result of experience and cultural conditioning, he wanted to eliminate it entirely.

Montagu insistently rejected, and even seemed to resent, Kinsey's attempt to redefine what was considered abnormal. "The social criteria of this society," he stated in 1948, "have always been, and we may predict will always continue to be, that homosexuality is an abnormal form of behavior." Good liberal that he was, he called for "an enlightened view of the position of the homosexual." Like other sexual liberals of his day, he did not advocate punishment or intolerance. But he did distinguish sympathy for the individual from "condoning" his or her condition. Unlike Klineberg and Benedict, he explicitly rejected the relativist view of sexuality. For Montagu, homosexuality was not just considered abnormal within the context of cultures that devalued it. "Homosexuality," he wrote, "is definitely an abnormality whenever and wherever it occurs in human societies." He wanted to educate parents about "the factors causing" it and thereby reduce it "to the

³⁷ M. F. Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (New York, 1942); M. F. Ashley Montagu, "The Cultural Determinance of Sexual Status," *University Review*, 7 (no. 1, 1940), 21–32; Ashley Montagu, "Anti-feminism and Race Prejudice," *Psychiatry*, 9 (1946), 69–71; Ashley Montagu, "The Natural Superiority of Women," *Saturday Review*, March 1, 1952, pp. 8, 9, 28–29; Ashley Montagu, *The Natural Superiority of Women* (New York, 1953); M. F. Ashley Montagu, "Understanding Our Sexual Desires," in *About the Kinsey Report*, ed. Geddes and Curie, 59–69. On Montagu and race, see Michelle Brattain, "Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public," *American Historical Review*, 112 (Dec. 2007), 1386–413.

³⁸ Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth*, 148, 181, 151; Montagu, "Understanding Our Sexual Desires," 60.

vanishing point.” And so he hoped to get rid of the sexual diversity that Kinsey and his colleagues portrayed in the very same year as benign natural variation.³⁹

Popular psychoanalytic theory bolstered Montagu’s discussions of both race and sexuality. On race, he used the frustration-causes-aggression argument to explain what he called race prejudice and race hatred. In Montagu’s account, frustrations in early childhood led “to resentment, to fear, to hatred and aggressiveness.” “Race prejudice,” he suggested, took place through “such . . . psychological mechanisms as *displacement* . . . and *projection*.” On homosexuality, he also placed the primary responsibility on early childhood interactions. Among the causal factors, he mentioned “family conditions” that caused the child “to identify . . . very strongly with” or “hate one or the other parent.”⁴⁰ He pointed to different psychological mechanisms to explain racism and homosexuality, but he ultimately used parallel language to describe racists and homosexuals. He saw race prejudice as “the effect of an incompletely developed personality” and saw homosexuals as “incomplete human being[s].” Both resulted, he thought, from defects in training and personality development. He hoped to eliminate both racism and homosexuality, largely through better education and better child rearing. “By adapting our educative procedures to the perfection of human personality,” he stated, “we can turn out a human being to almost any desired pattern.”⁴¹ Many of us today might applaud his call to eradicate racism and condemn his call to eliminate homosexuality, but both were part of his liberal biopolitics, in which cultures could be reshaped by retraining parents, revamping child rearing, and thereby changing the next generation of adult personalities.

Montagu used similar language to explain racism and homosexuality, but the culture-and-personality vision also allowed for other possible homologies. In the late 1930s and 1940s, a few observers drew a different parallel between racism or anti-Semitism and what we now call homophobia. At least a few commentators explained the irrational fear of homosexuals (as opposed to homosexuality itself) as a sign of a damaged personality and a “sick” culture. For some members of the Frankfurt School, for example, a deep hostility to homosexuals went hand in hand with racism and anti-Semitism as a trait of the culturally constructed “authoritarian personality” who had “a disposition to . . . fascist ideas.” In his breezy 1948 account of American national character, British popularizer Geoffrey Gorer, who worked with Mead and Benedict, also included an extended account of homophobia. He expressed no concern with homosexuality, only with American men’s exaggerated fear of it. The American male’s “panic” over homosexuality resulted from his unexpressed hostility to his especially smothering American mother, his own “feminine conscience” or “encapsulated mother,” and his insecure sense of his own active masculinity. In his analysis of American anti-Semitism, Gorer returned again to insecurity. Anti-Semites were either “individual prepsychotics” with “paranoid projections” or unassimilated gentiles who felt insecure in their Americanness. In this formulation, both anti-Semitism and anti-homosexual panic resulted from insecurities and personality problems that were culturally and parentally instilled.⁴²

³⁹ Montagu, “Understanding Our Sexual Desires,” 64, 65. Montagu’s views of homosexuality changed; by the late 1970s, he believed in “the essential normality of the homosexual” and rejected anti-homosexual bigotry, but he still saw homosexuality as a result of “parental inadequacy.” See Ashley Montagu, “A ‘Kinsey Report’ on Homosexualities,” *Psychology Today*, 12 (Aug. 1978), 66, 91.

⁴⁰ Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth*, 89, 91, 94. Emphasis in original. Montagu, “Understanding Our Sexual Desires,” 60, 64.

⁴¹ Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth*, 94; Montagu, “Understanding Our Sexual Desires,” 64, 66.

⁴² T. W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York, 1950), 15; Gorer, *American People*, 126, 205–6.

Pathology in the 1950s: Abram Kardiner

Gorer's book was part of a broader culture-and-personality search for the distinctive adult personalities found in particular nations. During World War II, a number of culture-and-personality scholars—Benedict, Mead, and Gorer among them—worked for the U.S. government and conducted “national character” studies of Americans, their allies, and their enemies. On the home front, they hoped to improve morale, and in the war zones, to learn how best to cooperate with the nation's allies and defeat its enemies. The national character studies used early childhood interactions to explain the perceived traits of groups of adults. As Mead claimed, “By examining the methods by which children are reared it is possible to obtain an accurate and reliable analysis of the character of adults.” At their best, the national character studies attempted to foster awareness of cultural variety and ethnocentric assumptions; at their worst, they provided reductive reiterations of pernicious ethnic stereotypes. Gorer's studies, for example, associated the alleged rage, hatred, and violence of the Russians with the swaddling of infants and the alleged compulsiveness of the Japanese with overly strict toilet training.⁴³ The enhanced emphasis on culture-specific child rearing practices also influenced the studies of subgroups within the United States, where it placed a heavy burden on parenting, especially on mothers.

Among the analysts in the culture-and-personality circles, none had more influence in this area than Abram Kardiner. Born in 1891, Kardiner grew up in poverty on New York City's Lower East Side. Like Klineberg and Montagu, he was of Jewish descent. His mother died when he was three, which might help explain his later insistence on the traumatic effect of maternal neglect. He graduated from the City College of New York and entered medical school at Cornell University. But in the 1910s, in the midst of a failed heterosexual romance, he dropped out of medical school temporarily and took courses at Columbia University, including ones taught by Franz Boas. He considered a career in anthropology but instead returned to medical school where he discovered psychoanalysis. In 1920 he joined the fledgling New York Psychoanalytic Society, and the following year he went to Vienna to undergo analysis with the master himself. (In American psychoanalytic circles, he had a certain cachet because of his sessions with Freud. He later wrote a book-length account of his experiences in Vienna.) In the 1930s he participated from the start in the culture-and-personality networks. He placed less stock in the innate libido and the oedipal complex than did the orthodox Freudians; like the émigré neo-Freudians Karen Horney and Erich Fromm, he emphasized the role of culture and environment in shaping personality. In the 1930s and 1940s he organized and co-taught an interdisciplinary seminar, first at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute then at Columbia University, on psychoanalysis and anthropology. His colleagues in anthropology supplied the eth-

For an earlier book in which Gorer also addressed American men's fear of homosexuality, see Geoffrey Gorer, *Hot Strip Tease and Other Notes on American Culture* (London, 1937), 88–91.

⁴³ Margaret Mead, “Anthropological Techniques in War Psychology,” *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 7 (1943), 137. On the national character studies, see also Margaret Mead, “National Character,” in *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*, ed. A. L. Kroeber (Chicago, 1953), 642–67; Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, “Science, Democracy, and Ethics: Mobilizing Culture and Personality for World War II,” in *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, ed. Stocking, 184–217; Richard Handler, “Boasian Anthropology and the Critique of American Culture,” *American Quarterly*, 42 (June 1990), 252–73; Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 17–47; and Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents*, 125–64. Geoffrey Gorer, “Some Aspects of the Psychology of the People of Great Russia,” *American Slavic and East European Review*, 8 (Oct. 1949), 155–66; Gorer, “Themes in Japanese Culture,” 273–90.

nographic data from their fieldwork in “primitive” cultures, and Kardiner provided the psychodynamic analyses.⁴⁴

Unlike orthodox psychoanalysts, Kardiner emphasized how culture shaped personality. From the mid-1930s on, he studied child rearing, especially mothering, in multiple societies and focused on how different patterns of child rearing produced different “basic personalities” in different cultures. From his studies in anthropology, he learned that “people had different ways of thinking, they had different fantasy life, and a different folklore, a different religion—they had, in short, a different order of human being.” His work with anthropologists led him to acknowledge human diversity in both culture and personality, but he had little taste for the relativist approach. He found Benedict “stupid,” “poorly informed,” “unoriginal,” and even “malicious.” Mead and Benedict, he said, did not understand psychodynamics, and (perhaps most damning in his eyes) they took credit for innovations that he considered his own. In turn, Benedict, Mead, and their friends disliked Kardiner and his approach. As one anthropologist wrote Benedict in 1939, “The thinking is incredibly bad, K[ardiner] has no command of the ethnological data, and he is overbearing and defensive.” For Kardiner, ethnography was mostly a way to study damage. “The study of a primitive society,” he recalled later, “gives you some big broad general outlines of the gross mistakes that can take place, as a result of defective social patterning. . . . You cannot tamper with the normal course of ontogenesis with a child without ruining the whole society.”⁴⁵ The problem was not individual neurotic or aberrant parents (as in much psychoanalysis) but “defective social patterning” that was instilled by parents. By the early 1950s, he had turned his attention to the United States.

Kardiner addressed race and sexuality in two books, *The Mark of Oppression* (1951), coauthored with the psychiatrist Lionel Ovesey, and *Sex and Morality* (1954). For *The Mark of Oppression*, Ovesey wrote up the book’s twenty-five case studies of individual African Americans, and Kardiner wrote the overarching interpretive analysis. In *Sex and Morality*, Kardiner alone responded to the second Kinsey report, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). In the two books, Kardiner presented much the same theory to explain the behavior of two (overlapping) groups in American society, black people and gay men. In both books, he used a culture-and-personality explanation, in which culture shaped personality, and he also adopted the now-standard psychoanalytic variant in which parents, especially mothers, transmitted culture to their children through early personality-shaping interactions. The twist in both books was that American families had failed to function as they should, thereby introducing flaws into the process of healthy cultural transmission and forcing children to adapt to an unhealthy environment. As evidence, Kardiner described the damaged psyches of self-hating people who had low self-esteem and dangerous levels of repressed rage and aggression. He argued in *The Mark of Oppression* that the American “caste system,” with its built-in racial discrimination and economic deprivation, had damaged the psyches of African Americans. In *Sex and Morality*, he concluded that American gender roles, or feminism gone-too-far, had hurt

⁴⁴ On Kardiner, see “The Reminiscences of Abram Kardiner,” interview by Bluma Swerdloff, 1963, transcript, Columbia University Oral History Project; William C. Manson, *The Psychodynamics of Culture: Abram Kardiner and Neo-Freudian Anthropology* (Westport, 1988); M. A. Farber, “Dr. Abram Kardiner, 89, a Student of Freud’s, Dies,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1981, p. A19; and William C. Manson, “Kardiner, Abram,” *American National Biography Online*, <http://www.anb.org/articles/12/12-01948.html>. Abram Kardiner, *My Analysis with Freud: Reminiscences* (New York, 1977).

⁴⁵ “Reminiscences of Abram Kardiner,” 296, 283–85; Ruth Landes to Benedict, Oct. 17, 1939, file 4, box 31, Benedict Papers; “Reminiscences of Abram Kardiner,” 364.

the psyches of middle- and upper-class (presumably white) men and inspired an epidemic of homosexuality.⁴⁶

According to both books, cultural problems caused bad parenting, and bad parenting injured the psyches of children who then grew up as damaged adults. American families—the transmitters of culture—had suffered, broken by divorce or desertion and stymied by confused gender roles. In both cases, Kardiner pointed especially (though not exclusively) to perceived maternal failings, such as neglect and dominance, which resulted in children who were, he said, unable to create the kinds of emotional ties that hold a sound society together. The result, for Kardiner, was neurotic people who engaged in apathetic, criminal, hedonistic, perverted, submissive, depressed, distrustful, overly aggressive, or overly passive behavior. Kardiner emphasized oppression in his analysis of race but not in his examination of homosexuality; however, the same underlying logic explained the alleged pathologies of African Americans and homosexuals. The cure in both cases involved reestablishing conventional gender roles in which women served primarily as mothers. For Kardiner (and for Mead, the sociologist Talcott Parsons, and others), conventional gender roles were social, not biological; they had developed historically in each culture to manage reproduction, and they served a critical function in the mental health of children. Kardiner used the anthropology but discarded its relativism. His study of other cultures had convinced him that “the patriarchal-monogamous family” was the best for the child. Alternative forms of child rearing endangered not only individual health but also collective order.⁴⁷

As the historians Ellen Herman, Daryl Scott, and others have shown, after World War II various social scientists argued that African Americans were psychologically damaged by racial prejudice, class and caste subordination, and matriarchal families. Kardiner, in particular, and the culture-and-personality school, more generally, played a central part in developing this approach and in calling attention to psychodynamics, child rearing, and mothers. The tendency to view people of color—especially African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans—as damaged personalities continued into the 1960s, when it was elaborated upon by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis (who studied with Benedict and Klineberg), Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and others who wrote about the “culture of poverty” or the “tangle of pathology.” It was no accident that African American and Latino/a activists protested the “culture of poverty” thesis, which portrayed them as pathological,

⁴⁶ Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression: Explorations in the Personality of the American Negro* (Cleveland, 1951), 61; Abram Kardiner, *Sex and Morality* (Indianapolis, 1954), 160–92. In *Mark of Oppression*, Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey recognized that some African Americans identified as homosexual; in *Sex and Morality*, Kardiner’s account of homosexuality did not address race and seemed to refer presumptively to the white middle class. Kardiner was not particularly interested in the intersections of race and sexuality or in how conceptions of sexuality were racialized and conceptions of race were sexualized; he focused more on what he portrayed as the common cultural and psychodynamic origins of racial and sexual pathologies. Alfred C. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia, 1953). A few historians have noted how some social scientists and social workers attributed the alleged mental deficiencies of African Americans to cultural pathology and the alleged mental deficiencies of whites to individual psychological aberration. Kardiner and the culture-and-personality school more generally show the two views as more intertwined. Kardiner acknowledged the interiority, subjectivity, and individual psychological life of African Americans (as well as their alleged cultural pathology) and pointed to cultural causes of the alleged neuroses of whites (as well as to their individual psychological constitution). On “black pathology” and “white neurosis,” see especially Regina G. Kunzel, “White Neurosis, Black Pathology: Constructing Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancy in the Wartime and Postwar United States,” in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia, 1994), 304–31.

⁴⁷ Kardiner, *Sex and Morality*, 196. On Kardiner and motherhood, see Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents*, 154–55; and Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930–1965* (Ithaca, 2000), 53–60.

at roughly the same time that gay liberationists protested psychiatrists' view of homosexuality as pathological, and that feminists, too, protested the negative portrayals of mothers. On those specific issues, they all were arguing, in part, against a culture-and-personality social constructionist vision that posited flawed cultures, weakened families, damaging mothers, and vulnerable children who grew up to be abnormal adults.⁴⁸

But critics did not wait until the 1960s and 1970s to register their dissent. Kardiner's comments on blacks and gays attracted skepticism from the start. In the African American press and in African American scholarly journals, several reviewers of *The Mark of Oppression* resented Kardiner's portrayal of black people as neurotic. They wondered repeatedly how he could draw broad conclusions from only twenty-five case studies, "all residents of the unique community of Harlem, most of whom, if not all, appear psycho-neurotic." As Kardiner himself remembered in 1963, people interpreted his "work on the Negro . . . as against the interests of these people." Likewise, in the homophile (or early gay rights) press, at least one reader recoiled from a positive review of Kardiner's *Sex and Morality*. The review had come out in 1955 in the first issue of the *Mattachine Review*, and it inspired a letter, published under the headline "Reformers Can Be Cruel." Even if homosexuality was not biological (and the letter writer thought the question was not yet resolved) and even if homosexuals were "twisted and gnarled" by early environmental conditioning, clinical case studies eliminated "the profound human emotion," the "living human experience," and "the music" of homosexuality. "There is greater truth," he wrote, "in [Walt Whitman's] *Song of Myself* than in all the psychiatric case histories ever published. When psychotherapy attempts to be more than just the key to free the poetry in man, then it becomes another tyranny."⁴⁹ As the critical commentary suggests, Kardiner's pathologizing approach was not universally welcomed.

Benedict's Postwar Resurrection

One way to construct this history is through a narrative of one-way change, in which the leadership of the culture-and-personality school shifted from the relativists, such as Benedict and Klineberg, to the pathologizers, such as Montagu and Kardiner. But that story fails to capture a more complicated history, in which both tendencies coexisted in tension, often in the works of individual authors, through much of the twentieth century. None of the relativists ever asked for a total suspension of value judgments. In the face of fascism, to give the most often-used example, even the most avid relativists backed away from the claim that all cultures were equally worthy. But even as they backed away, the culture-and-personality scholars continued to use the relativist vision to question accounts that reinforced and naturalized traditional social hierarchies. They asked their readers to think critically about their own (and other) societies by reminding them that there was more than one way to construct a viable social order. They applied their relativism

⁴⁸ Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 174–207; Scott, *Contempt and Pity*. See also O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*; and Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, 162–92. On the gay protest against psychiatry, see Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry*.

⁴⁹ Robert M. Hughes, "The End Products of Oppression," *Phylon*, 12 (no. 4, 1951), 393; "Reminiscences of Abram Kardiner," 424; Luther Allen, "Reformers Can Be Cruel," *Mattachine Review*, 1 (March/April 1955), 30, 31. For other similarly critical reviews in African American publications, see Howard E. Mitchell, review of *The Mark of Oppression* by Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, *Journal of Negro History*, 36 (Oct. 1951), 452–53; "Attacks Phony Yardstick Used to Create Bias," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 31, 1952, pp. 18–19; and Robert T. Amos, "Personality and Psychosocial Adjustment Patterns," *Journal of Negro Education*, 22 (Autumn 1953), 493–94.

and their pathologizing strategically and pragmatically, not as either/or blanket approaches, but as useful ways of thinking about particular social and political issues. Like many of us today, they debated which socially constructed differences should be construed as “coexisting and equally valid” contributions to an enriching diversity and which socially constructed differences should be placed in a hierarchy of better and worse.⁵⁰

In any case, in the postwar era, the plot of the story thickens and turns. Just as it seemed that the pathology model had undermined cultural relativism, Ruth Benedict's early vision of relativism made its greatest foray into the public domain. In the late 1940s and after, Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* recaptured the public eye. During World War II, Benedict reached a high level of public recognition when, with the anthropologist Gene Weltfish, she wrote a controversial pamphlet, *The Races of Mankind*, which repudiated biological theories of race difference. The 1943 pamphlet included the now-standard culture-and-personality arguments against racial hierarchies and racism, repackaged in short form to educate the public and also American soldiers. Within a few months it came under attack. Most notably, Kentucky congressman Andrew J. May, the chair of the House Military Affairs Committee, objected to the pamphlet because it reprinted the findings of a 1921 study in which northern blacks had a higher median score on IQ tests than had southern whites. In the wake of May's complaints, the U.S. Army, which had ordered thousands of copies of the pamphlet, backed away from it. In the resulting media coverage, Benedict appeared in dozens of newspaper and magazine articles, and her pamphlet became a liberal cause. Within two years, almost 750,000 copies had sold. The pamphlet was taught in schools, excerpted in magazines and textbooks, performed as a play, displayed as a traveling exhibition, and adapted as a filmstrip, an animated film, a comic book, and a children's story. Soon after, in 1946, Benedict published her influential (and still controversial) national character study of Japan, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. The book, which captured Benedict's ambivalent combination of relativism and social engineering, asked its American readers to study, understand, and “respect differences,” and also advocated changes in Japanese culture to make it less militaristic, less hierarchical, and freer. It enhanced Benedict's reputation as an authority on culture, and not just in left-leaning circles. At the end of 1946, General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters invited her to East Asia, in part, as the invitation from the War Department read, “to recommend a course of action for the reorientation of the partially feudal mentality of Japan and Korea to modern democratic needs.”⁵¹

After World War II, then, Ruth Benedict was a major figure, a well-known public intellectual at the height of her political clout. Because of her growing fame, Penguin Books reissued *Patterns of Culture* in 1946 as a cheap paperback, which sold for 25 cents a copy.

⁵⁰ Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 278. On the varied meanings of and more recent debates over cultural relativism, see, for example, Hollinger, *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity*, 160–84.

⁵¹ Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, *The Races of Mankind* (New York, 1943); Violet Edwards, “Note on *The Races of Mankind*,” in *Race: Science and Politics*, by Ruth Benedict (New York, 1947), 167–68; Margaret M. Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land* (Austin, 1989), 297–99; “Plans New Edition of Race Pamphlet,” *New York Times*, March 8, 1944, p. 11. Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston, 1946), 15; D. Donald Klous to Benedict, Dec. 26, 1946, file 10, box 13, Benedict Papers. Benedict declined the War Department invitation because she was already involved in her own international project, Research in Contemporary Cultures, for which she had sought and soon received funding from the Office of Naval Research. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* has been extensively critiqued (in Japan as well as the United States) for its inadequate research, sweeping generalizations, and orientalist and pathologizing vision of Japanese culture. For a recent analysis, see Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York, 2003), 171–90.

It chose *Patterns of Culture* as the inaugural book in its new scholarly paperback series. By the postwar years, some social scientists considered *Patterns of Culture* outdated. Since the book's initial publication in 1934, the sociologist Nathan Glazer wrote in the *Nation*, "there has been a reaction against relativism both in anthropology and in modern thought in general." In 1946 it was now possible, he stated starkly, "to say that one culture is good and another is bad." Nonetheless, the reissued book quickly found a new generation of readers. In 1948, when Rutgers University announced its first "book of the year," it chose *Patterns of Culture* as the one book to be read by "everyone on the campus from deans to undergraduate freshmen." In its original hardcover version, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1934, *Patterns of Culture* had sold around five thousand copies in its first ten years on the market. But with the cheap paperback, Benedict's celebrity status, and post-war interest in intercultural understanding, sales rocketed and continued to rise well after Benedict's death in 1948. In the first ten years after its paperback debut (from 1946 to 1956), *Patterns of Culture* sold around 700,000 copies; by the mid-1960s, it had sold 1.25 million. By the end of the 1950s, it had been translated into fourteen languages and was regularly assigned in American college courses at least into the 1970s. It was, Abram Kardiner groused, "the most widely read of all books on anthropology ever written."⁵²

And so Ruth Benedict returned from the grave, as it were, for an encore performance. At the very moment that cultural relativism had fallen out of favor among social scientists, the text that most touted it took on a new life. It became, one historian noted, "a tool of personal liberation for many millions of the students who read it." Benedict's critique of abnormality, the final chapter of the book, reached its greatest distribution in the two decades after her death. When the gay liberation movement entered the scene at the end of the 1960s, activists drew on *Patterns of Culture* to argue against the pathologizing model that construed homosexuality as sickness.⁵³ In this way, Benedict's 1934 critique of abnormality was neither forgotten nor replaced by a dominant psychoanalytic model. It served as required reading for college students, a resource for an emerging social movement, and a reference for a new iteration of social constructionist thought.

Rethinking the Histories of Race and Sexuality

The literary critic and queer theorist Siobhan Somerville has called recently for us to investigate "the unacknowledged logic" that underlies constructions of race and sexuality "within the same . . . history." Instead of looking at the history of either race or sexuality, she calls for "an approach that historicizes the . . . production of racial and sexual formations simultaneously and that can account for the ways that ideologies . . . have been mutually constituted." The culture-and-personality school, with its self-conscious interdisciplinarity, invites us to look at the "unacknowledged logic," as Somerville sug-

⁵² Nathan Glazer, "The Anthropological Revolution," *Nation*, June 15, 1946, p. 722; "New Plan at Rutgers to Widen Knowledge," *New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1948, p. 36; "Reminiscences of Abram Kardiner," 284. For sales figures, see Ferris Greenslet to Benedict, May 18, 1943, file 5, box 11, Benedict Papers; "Paperback Books Go High-brow; Sartre, Spillane Slug It Out," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 23, 1956, p. 1; and David Dempsey, "What's in It for Authors?," *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1964, pp. BRA26–27. On translations, see Donald Cook, "Ruth Benedict: Culture as Personality," *New Republic*, March 2, 1959, p. 17. On the reaction against relativism, see also Martin Gardner, "Beyond Cultural Relativism," *Ethics*, 61 (Oct. 1950), 38–45.

⁵³ Matthews, "Revolt against Americanism," 18. For examples of activists using *Patterns of Culture*, see Appendix E of Amicus Curiae Brief of the Homosexual Law Reform Society of America, 91, Supreme Court Records and Briefs for *Boutilier v. Immigration and Naturalization Service*, 387 U.S. 118 (1967); and Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and the Sickness Theory: A Critique* (London, 1969). Thanks to Margot Canaday for the *Boutilier* reference.

gests, that simultaneously and mutually constituted race and sexuality in mid-twentieth-century social science. The enduring legacy of the culture-and-personality school was not the interdisciplinary cooperation between anthropology and psychoanalysis, which dissipated in the 1950s, especially after critics panned reductive national character studies.⁵⁴ Its enduring legacy was the larger shift in social thought that the school represented. Culture-and-personality scholars used the same logic, a single metanarrative—on cultural transmission via the shaping of personality—to explain various kinds of human difference. The metanarrative they used for sexuality and race also appeared in their explanations of gender, criminality, aggression, and fascism.

What do we gain by stepping back and looking at the metanarrative? We can see, first, the ongoing tension between a cultural relativism that situated socially constructed difference primarily as variance and a concept of abnormality that situated socially constructed difference primarily as pathology. Because the two tendencies—toward cultural relativism and toward pathologization—came together in the culture-and-personality school, we can observe how individual scholars and popularizers grappled with them, chose between them, and combined them in various permutations. We are reminded, second, that the intellectual histories of race and sexuality are not as separate as we sometimes think, that the same people who reformulated conceptions of race also reformulated conceptions of sexuality. The cultural relativism that reconstituted understandings of race and ethnicity emerged in part through debates over sexuality, and the notions of psychological abnormality that shaped concepts of sexuality had an impact on understandings of race and ethnicity. The culture-and-personality scholars used Freudian psychoanalysis to understand race as well as sex, and they used Boasian relativism to understand sex as well as race. In the end, the midcentury nonbiological vision of homosexuality was not always as stigmatizing as the history of psychoanalysis often suggests, and the nonbiological vision of race was not always as de-stigmatizing as the history of anthropology sometimes implies.

Finally, we can begin to historicize the social constructionist thought of the twentieth century and turn our attention to the liberal biopolitics it fostered. The culture-and-personality school began as a liberal and left-leaning challenge to racial hierarchies, sexual repression, fascism, and constricted gender roles, and it explicitly rejected eugenics. But its social constructionist vision could—and did—encourage other regimes for managing populations. The now-standard histories of race and sexuality in the mid-twentieth-century United States suggest that social scientists promoted racial integration and intergroup cooperation (which some of them indeed did) and that psychoanalysts tried to “cure” homosexuals (which some of them indeed did). But the history of the culture-and-personality nexus highlights a larger biopolitical agenda. The live-and-let-live, let’s-be-tolerant message of cultural relativism came conjoined from the start with prescriptions for change at home and abroad. Most of the culture-and-personality scholars called unabashedly for “social engineering,” some of them reinscribed conventional boundaries

⁵⁴ Siobhan B. Somerville, “Queer *Loving*,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 11 (no. 3, 2005), 355–70, 347, 359. For postwar critiques of national character studies, see Robert Endleman, “The New Anthropology and Its Ambitions: The Science of Man in Messianic Dress,” *Commentary*, 8 (Sept. 1949), 284–91; Otto Klineberg, “Recent Studies of National Character,” in *Culture and Personality*, ed. S. Stansfeld Sargent and Marian W. Smith (New York, 1949), 127–38; and Alfred R. Lindesmith and Anselm L. Strauss, “A Critique of Culture-Personality Writings,” *American Sociological Review*, 15 (Oct. 1950), 587–600. By the mid-1950s, the field of anthropology, which had been shaped by culture-and-personality arguments, had moved away from relativism and psychology, and psychoanalysts tended to focus more on individual family dynamics and therapeutic adjustment than on cultural diversity or broad cultural change.

dividing “normal” from “pathological,” and others turned toward a functionalist vision in which they repudiated biologism but nonetheless endorsed adjustment to the mainstream status quo. On issues of race, sexuality, and more, the culture-and-personality scholars often translated social and economic injustice into issues of mental health. Most ambitiously, they sometimes imagined the wholesale restructuring of the personalities, behavior, and traits of various groups, subgroups, communities, and nations.

At its boldest, the culture-and-personality school suggested that social scientists could redesign the character of a culture by modifying the child rearing of its future generations. “This,” one postwar enthusiast proclaimed, “is potentially one of the greatest scientific discoveries of modern times. . . . *The single most important thing in human cultural behavior is literally and specifically the way we bring up our children.*” Child rearing was “the key to . . . evolution”; it had the potential “*to shape almost any kind of human personality that an increasingly integrated world requires.*” This prescription for change lifted child rearing from the domain of parents and families (and pediatricians and therapists) and into the realm of group identity, national politics, and international relations. In the era of “momism” and “matriarchs,” it involved an assessment of parenting and invited interventions that would especially monitor mothers.⁵⁵ In various formulations, it promised to enhance achievement and motivation; control impulses and reduce aggression, eliminate homosexuality; instill gender roles; erase homophobia, racism, and sexism; and increase cooperation, self-esteem, and tolerance. It could—and would—be used, in different ways and to different ends, by, among others, modernization theorists, state welfare agencies, civil rights activists, gay rights activists, feminists, and advocates of a multicultural society.

⁵⁵ Weston LaBarre, “The Age Period of Cultural Fixation,” *Mental Hygiene*, 33 (April 1949), 211, 216. Emphasis in original. For a recent account of the politicization of motherhood in the postwar era, see Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*.