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By

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ARCHITECTS OF THE SELF: SOCIAL SCIENTISTS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN POSTWAR AMERICA

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

American professional social science experienced unprecedented institutional growth during and after the Second World War. This was due in part to the increased need for techniques in human resource management among government, military, corporate, and educational institutions, as well as for strategies of individual adjustment in a rapidly changing postwar culture. Social scientists were enlisted to help produce social technologies for a society confronting new patterns of work, domestic life, and community. Scientific representations of the individual underwent reassessment and modification as a result. The general expansion of science and technology during this period also catapulted individual scientists beyond the academy into new positions of public authority. This dissertation examines the careers of two prominent social scientists cum public intellectuals and their contrasting visions of the individual as an efficient automaton and a multidimensional whole.

The behaviorist psychologist B. F. Skinner and the cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead both made central contributions to American social science and the scientific depiction of human nature in the twentieth century. Mead and Skinner each crafted a unique vision of humanity and applied it to their respective critiques of postwar American culture. Their social theories were shaped not only by scientific research and experimental methodology but also by the expectations of emerging public constituencies during the postwar decades that placed different demands on conceptions of the self and human potentiality in American society.

By examining the reciprocal exchange and appropriation of social scientific and popular images of the individual, this project contributes to a growing canon in the history of science that addresses the cultural history of American social science. Specifically, my research on Mead and Skinner as public intellectuals and as representatives of American culture has three main objectives.

The first objective is to explore their scientific depictions of self and society in the context of burgeoning bureaucracy and technocracy in America during the first half of the twentieth century. Skinner's vision of the self epitomized the calculated efficiency of scientifically informed techniques of systemization and control in American technocracy. This mechanistic vision of human potential in the social sciences had its roots in various management-oriented strains of progressive era social reform initiatives. The phenomenon of Taylorism, as I argue, is one among several examples. Mead's view of the holistic self, diverse in its potentiality, yet unique in each individual and culture, however, was born of the liberal Democratic response among humanist social scientists and progressives to these dehumanizing trends. While Skinner's vision of future culture entailed a scientific meritocracy, Mead's designs on post-World War Two social management promoted an interdisciplinary contingent in the social sciences dedicated to the fulfillment of American democracy.

The second objective of this dissertation is to examine the popularization of Skinnerian and Meadian science, technology, and social ideology among various public audiences in postwar American culture. While previous scholarship has examined this process largely from the vantage point of Skinner's and Mead's own opinions, my research explores some of the specific ways in which their mechanistic and holistic

visions of the self and society were appropriated, critiqued, and transformed in the popular discourse on the changing image of modern humanity. As I demonstrate, Skinner's vision of the programmable self had a profound and long lasting influence, for example, on public education and corporate training programs in the United States and abroad. Mead's holistic vision of the self, one informed by her accounts of cultural diversity across the globe, became the subject of both criticism and praise among social science professionals involved in the rapidly expanding 'expert' advice industry in the postwar decades. Mead's participation in this industry, and her application of comparative cultural anthropology to advice on child rearing, education, and the search for individual identity, became inextricably linked to the politics of social reform and liberation among second wave feminists and the youth counterculture in the 1960s.

A third aim of this dissertation is to use these narratives on the public careers of Skinner and Mead as case studies in considering how conflicting images of human nature in modern social science reflect the broad cultural tension between a desire for unencumbered human freedom and independence on the one hand, and the need for mechanisms of social control that will help society run well on the other. The fact that Skinnerian and Meadian visions of the self catapulted their inventors to public celebrity in postwar American culture at the same time indicates that Americans have learned to embrace both images of human nature. Americans apply both images of the self selectively in defining individual identity and refining the myriad systems of individual and social management in modern life.

CHAPTER ONE

ARCHITECTS OF THE SELF: PROGRESSIVE ERA ROOTS AND POSTWAR PUBLIC CAREERS

Following the Second World War, professional social science in the United States experienced an era of unprecedented institutional growth partly as a result of the increased need for human resource management in governmental, military, corporate, and educational institutions. As social scientists were enlisted to help produce technologies for a society struggling to adjust to changing patterns of work, family life, and community, scientific representations of the individual underwent reassessment and modification. The tremendous expansion of organized science, and the proliferation of technology, during this period also catapulted individual scientists beyond the academy and into new positions of public authority as expert commentators on postwar American culture. The present study examines the social technologies, public commentaries, and social reform theories of two prominent and widely known American scientists, the psychologist B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) and the anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901-1978), with regard to their respective and contrasting scientific visions of the individual as an efficient automaton on the one hand, and as a multidimensional whole on the other.

Through historical consideration of the social scientist as a social critic and public intellectual, I will examine the connections in these case studies between theory construction in the research setting and the participation of scientists in the broader culture. How, for example, are we to explain the rise in American culture of such a cult figure as B. F. Skinner, who achieved unprecedented public notoriety for his social

technologies and his vision of future society? In what ways did Margaret Mead's famous anthropological studies of primitive societies inform her critique of American social mores and contribute to her public authority as an internationally known commentator on American postwar culture? How did their participation in public debates concerning social reform influence the construction, execution and reception of their scientific research?

Their influence on public perceptions of anthropology and behavioral psychology has forced historians of these disciplines to reexamine Mead's and Skinner's place in social science and reinterpret instances where their contributions were marginalized by colleagues and contemporaries. Much of the scholarship by social scientists and historians on Skinner and Mead has focused on their contributions to academic psychology and anthropology. In such studies, their participation in public debates is either deemed irrelevant or significant only insofar as it incurred criticism from their colleagues about the scientific merits of their research. A smaller number of studies have attempted to assess Skinner and Mead as public intellectuals, but in many cases these treatments have been insular, addressing their public celebrity from the perspective of the scientists themselves. In the process, unjustified generalizations about the audiences of science in postwar American culture have been invoked to explain why Skinner's and Mead's opinions were either accepted or rejected. Only a few scholars have discussed in detail both how Skinner and Mead were talked about outside the social science profession and how their ideas were incorporated into real-world technologies and practical strategies of social adjustment.

By focusing on the scientific and public careers of Mead and Skinner, I will combine American social and cultural history with the history of social science. The intersection of these narratives will be the "self"; the study will explore scientific depictions of the self, i. e., human nature, and their influence on contemporary debates about social management in American society in the post-World War Two era.[1]

My study of Mead and Skinner as public intellectuals and as representatives of American culture thus has three main objectives. The first is to explore their scientific depictions of self and society in the context of burgeoning bureaucracy and technocracy in America during the first half of the twentieth century. I will argue that Mead and Skinner represent two distinct, divergent perspectives on human nature and that these divergent perspectives were central to both modern social science and American culture. Indeed, their lives and works mark the changing course of twentieth century thought on modern American life. Their scientific methodologies and theories of social engineering were products of progressive era reform ideology, and they were shaped in turn by the subsequent politics of social reform during the Interwar period, the Cold War, and the 1960s social protest movements. Given the overall progressive commitment to a systematic and scientific approach to the organization of material and human resources, Mead's and Skinner's theories of scientific social reform, in some instances, appeared strikingly similar. For the most part, however, their individual approaches to the central concept of the "self" led to very different conclusions about, among many other things,

[1] By way of defining 'science' in social science for purposes of the present treatment, I mean those investigations into human behavior that produce not only an understanding of diversity in human nature and culture but also of regularities in behavior that afford some measure of prediction, if not direct control, over human phenomena. Certainly, Skinner and Mead were both interested in these aspects of a potential 'science of culture,' but it is clear that Skinner, unlike Mead, was much more focused on the laboratory manipulation and experimental control of human potentiality.

the proper role of science in government and the viability of American democracy. Skinner's vision of the self epitomized the calculated efficiency of scientifically informed techniques of systematization and control in American technocracy. This mechanistic vision of human potential in the social sciences had its roots in various management-oriented strains of progressive era social reform initiatives. The phenomenon of Taylorism, as I argue, is one among several examples. Mead's view of the holistic self, diverse in its potentiality, yet unique in each individual and culture, however, was born of the liberal Democratic response among humanist social scientists and progressives to these dehumanizing trends. While Skinner's vision of future culture entailed a scientific meritocracy, Mead's designs on post-World War Two social management promoted an interdisciplinary contingent in the social sciences dedicated to the fulfillment of American democracy.

The second objective of this dissertation is to examine the popularization of Skinnerian and Meadian science, technology, and social ideology among various public audiences in postwar American culture. While previous scholarship has examined this process largely from the vantage point of Skinner's and Mead's own opinions, my research explores some of the specific ways in which their mechanistic and holistic visions of the self and society were appropriated, critiqued, and transformed in the popular discourse on the changing image of modern humanity. I also will examine how Mead and Skinner, in presenting their thoughts to public audiences, dealt in a common set of postwar cultural themes and metaphors that guided their discussion of *social change*. Both used the evolutionary concept of *adaptation*, a concept central to postwar science, to discuss the relationship of the individual to the surrounding environment.

They also invoked the physical and visual dimensions of the *laboratory* to discuss comprehensive social change as well as child rearing and education reform. Both Skinner and Mead also used the rhetoric of *human potential* to discuss how social engineering could transform human nature. While Skinner used these metaphors to construct a mechanistic vision of self and society in the postwar decades, Mead had begun to employ them in constructing a humanistic and holistic science of culture as early as the 1930s.

By deconstructing the rhetorical and technological tools that Mead and Skinner used to mass market their critiques of American culture in the postwar decades, I will draw new distinctions between their scientific research findings and the content of the knowledge products that they deployed to meet public demands for techniques of social adjustment. As I will demonstrate, Skinner's vision of the programmable self had a profound and long lasting influence, for example, on public education and corporate training programs in the United States and abroad. Mead's holistic vision of the self, one informed by her accounts of cultural diversity across the globe, became the subject of both criticism and praise among social science professionals involved in the rapidly expanding 'expert' advice industry in the postwar decades. Mead's participation in this industry, and her application of comparative cultural anthropology to advice on child rearing, education, and the search for individual identity, became inextricably linked to the politics of social reform and liberation among second wave feminists and the youth counterculture in the 1960s.

The third aim of my study will be to use my narratives on the public careers of Skinner and Mead as case studies in considering how conflicting images of human nature

in modern social science reflect the broad cultural tension in modern America between a desire for unencumbered human freedom and independence on the one hand, and the need for mechanisms of social control that will help society run well on the other. In tracing the popular appropriation and transformation of Skinner's and Mead's visions of human nature in the postwar decades, I will show how these two public intellectuals contributed to the ongoing debate in American culture over the place and face of the self in modern society. In this endeavor I will combine different aspects of the canon of American cultural history and historiography with that of the cultural history of science. Such combinations have been explored tentatively by historians of the social sciences, and only to a limited extent in the cases of Mead and Skinner. With regard to philosophical considerations concerning the self, the pairing of Skinner and Mead allows us to examine how Americans contended with the existential and political implications of an increasingly technocratic society over the course of the twentieth century. The fact that Skinnerian and Meadian visions of the self catapulted their inventors to public celebrity in postwar American culture at the same time, I argue, indicates that Americans have learned to embrace both images of human nature. We apply both images of the self selectively in defining individual identity and refining our myriad systems of individual and social management in modern life.

My juxtaposition of these two social scientists does not stem from any contemporary professional association between Skinner and Mead. Although Skinner and Mead undoubtedly were aware of each other as public scientists, they were not scientific rivals. I will argue, however, that in their capacity as high-profile spokespersons for different perspectives in the human sciences, they exemplified

distinctive research methodologies that were characteristic of a community of practitioners in social science. Such theoretical and methodological differences, moreover, were correlated strongly with disciplinary growth and diversification in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Mechanistic and holistic images of the self each exerted a powerful influence on the postwar development of the applied social sciences (therapeutic, administrative, and industrial) and their incorporation into commerce and government.

The history of the social sciences in the early twentieth century reveals strong developmental connections to the phenomena of American urbanization and the rise of progressive era social management. The progressive era was exemplified in a number of strains of social reform dedicated to mediating the complexities of urbanization. Clearly, no one movement characterized progressivism as a whole. Progressives generally were committed to municipal reform and social welfare/melioration through the analysis of social phenomena and the efficient systemization of material and social management. There were, however, basic cleavages within progressive reform ideologies that had profound consequences for the development of the social sciences. They also shaped the scientific commitments of individual scientists like Skinner and Mead who received their training when progressive reform ideals still held sway. The most important cleavage for the present study involves the distinction between those progressives who espoused the virtues of the sciences in designing efficient "technologies" of social control, and those generally affiliated with the Social Gospel, philanthropy, labor, and social welfare perspectives on reform. The latter group embraced forms of social melioration that were designed to preserve democracy and human dignity in the face of dehumanizing trends in

industrialism and technocracy. The former group, meanwhile, sought to find security in order and efficiency, and expert management.

Managerial reform ideology often entailed the conceptualization of the individual as a standardized machine whose efficiency and production could be enhanced by the study of behavior as influenced by the surrounding environment. Another line of reform ideology upheld a holistic and dynamic vision of the self, defined not by technological systems, but rather by personal history and experience, by culture and community, and by individual uniqueness and agency. This divergence in the image of the self had important implications for how human nature would be studied and defined in the twentieth century by a new generation of social scientists. Many historians have pointed to the central significance of Frederick W. Taylor and the ideology of Scientific Management, for example, in linking broad trends in urban management with science and technology, as well as with the cult of the scientific expert in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century America.[2] Indeed it can be argued that the popular message of Taylorism familiarized many Americans with social science for the first time at the turn of the century.

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[2] See the collection of essays edited by Daniel Nelson regarding the influence of Scientific Management on management and industrial production theory in the twentieth century, especially his essay entitled "Scientific Management in Retrospect," in *A Mental Revolution: Scientific Management Since Taylor*, ed. Daniel Nelson (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1992), 5-39. See also Stephen P. Waring, "Peter Drucker, MBO, and the Corporatist Critique of Scientific Management," in *A Mental Revolution*, 205-36. Waring has argued that Scientific Management evolved into a fundamental management tenet of bureaucratic administration in American industry and government in the twentieth century, and into a political philosophy of social management. See his extended discussion in *Taylorism Transformed: Scientific Management Theory Since 1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). For a discussion of the influence of Scientific Management on the famous Chicago school of management theory see Robert H. Nelson, *Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). Robert Kanigel has also explored the influence of Scientific Management in what is surely the most exhaustive and informative biography of Taylor to date. Taylorism and the scientific approach to all systems in our society -- social, industrial, educational, domestic, and otherwise cultural -- is, as he says, quoting from Edward Erye Hunt's 1924 review of advances in Scientific Management theory, "part of our moral inheritance" as Americans. See Robert Kanigel, *The One Best Way: Frederick Winslow Taylor and the Enigma of Efficiency* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), 7, quoting from *Scientific Management Since Taylor: A Collection of Authoritative Papers*, ed. Edward Eyre Hunt (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1924), xiv.

To be sure, however, neither Skinner nor Mead thought of themselves as progressives, nor did Skinner see himself as a direct inheritor of Taylorism. There is to my knowledge no evidence that Skinner was familiar with Taylor or the philosophy of Scientific Management.[3] The similarity between Taylorism and Skinnerian behaviorism,

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As Kanigel notes, many late twentieth-century social critics, literati, and historians including Jeremy Rifkin, Anson Rabenbach, Peter Drucker, Robert Reich, Stephen Waring, Richard Pfeffer, Harry Braverman, and Neil Postman have discussed scientific efficiency and productivity, and our obsession with time, scheduling, and organization, as hallmarks of American culture that have their origin in Scientific Management. Further evidence of our thoroughly "Taylored lives" is addressed in the equally exhaustive cultural survey by Martha Banta. She has scoured the literary and popular press of the early twentieth century to reveal the sources of our enduring cultural penchant for theory making and system building, and our want of scientific explanations of human behavior. Industry and the social sciences took up the cause of technocracy and social reform in the belief that 'the system' would eventually solve all problems of adjustment in the factory, the government, and the household. System making, as Martha Banta demonstrates, became the chief industry of "engineers, psychologists, business leaders, anthropologists, political strategists, domestic scientists, product designers, [and] literary critics." See Martha Banta, *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), xi. For a discussion of Taylorism's international influence on industry and social management theory, specifically in Russia, France, Germany, and Great Britain, see Judith Merkle, *Management and Ideology: The Legacy of the International Scientific Management Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[3] This contention is corroborated in the research of Alexandra Rutherford who has also examined Skinner and the history of Skinnerian behaviorism in America. In her investigation of Skinner's behaviorism and his behavioral social philosophy in the 1940s (especially his utopian novel, *Walden Two*, published in 1948), and that of the technocrats and the Technocracy Movement in the early 1930s, Rutherford discusses their ideological similarity and their common intellectual heritage in the work of classical behaviorists John B. Watson and Ivan Pavlov. Both Skinner and the technocrats believed in an engineering approach to managing society, as well as the primacy of scientific rationality. Skinner and the technocrats also shared an environment-oriented, mechanistic view of human nature. Rutherford notes, however, that she as yet has found no documented evidence that Skinner knew about the Technocracy Movement or its philosophies, or that he had any direct contact with members of this movement. See chapter three of her dissertation thesis, "B. F. Skinner and Technology's Nation: Lessons from Harold Loeb, Howard Scott, and the Technocracy Movement," in "Between the Science of Behavior and the Art of Living: B. F. Skinner and Psychology's Public in Mid-Twentieth Century America" (Ph.D. diss., York University, 2001), 126-161. See especially her conclusions in this chapter that start on page 160. Rutherford argues that the striking similarities between Skinner's theories in the 1940s and those of the technocrats in the early 1930s has to do with a general rise in the influence of science and technology in American culture. She also observes that Americans rejected the idea of comprehensive technocracy in the postwar decades, choosing democracy instead. In the arguments presented herein I contend that similarities among the utopian visions of scientists and technocrats, social reformers, and fiction writers during the 1930s and beyond have to do with a broader cultural trend toward bureaucracy and technocracy, and that these trends have their societal origin in such things as urbanization and progressivism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I would also disagree with Rutherford that the public rejection of scientific meritocracy as proposed by Skinner and the technocrats also signifies a wholesale rejection of technocracy and the cult of scientific expertise in service of social management in American culture. While Americans certainly did not wish to live in anything like a technocratic utopia (or dystopia, by some reckonings) they certainly did embrace the authority of science, professional expertise, efficiency, organization, and scientific system building in making many parts of American society run well.

as I will argue, is a consequence of the profound effects that broader movements in scientific social management had on social science during the progressive era. In Mead's case, her view of progressive politics was shaped by her family experiences. Both of Mead's parents were progressives who were active in grass roots social reform movements. Mead, however, concluded that their efforts had been ineffectual in creating substantive change in social policy. This, coupled with the disillusionment of the First World War, convinced her and her colleagues in anthropology that a socially relevant and politically informed presentation of comparative anthropology would do more for the cause of social justice and democracy in the long run. Mead embraced the concern for the individual and democracy that meliorative progressivism espoused, but not its political agenda for reform. The history of scientific social management thus will be an important backdrop in the present study for exploring the tension between contrasting images of the self in social science in the American post-World War Two context.

In the 1920s Skinner began to cultivate a reductionist view of the organisms that he used in his behavioral psychological experiments, conceiving of them as devices that could be designed to specification. Mead opposed dehumanizing trends in social science and American technocracy during the 1920s and embraced instead an interdisciplinary approach to anthropology, one that celebrated human dignity and a liberal democratic vision of society. Her holistic vision of the individual, as a wellspring of complex biological and psychological potentialities that were intimately intertwined with the surrounding world, propelled Mead's use of comparative cultural anthropology as a forum for addressing human injustice, discrimination, and social decay in the 1930s. Skinner eschewed any social role for experimental psychology during the 1930s. In the

1940s, however, Skinner universalized his operant behaviorism, claiming that his methods applied equally well to humans and human society. In Skinner's emergent theories of social management in the late 1940s he rejected all forms of traditional political and socio-economic theory, opting instead for the direct management of society by expertly trained social engineers. He also believed in the universality of operant psychology in explaining the self and society, to the exclusion of all other social scientific lines of inquiry. In the course of his experiments in the 1950s and 60s with technologies of social control, Skinner argued that the reform of social management techniques in education and municipal government required that traditional assumptions about human autonomy and dignity be left aside and that scientific control of technocracy be embraced. Mead, on the other hand, argued in the 1950s and 60s for a revised social welfare system that balanced the needs of the individual with the desire for urban social management systems.

By the early 1970s Mead and Skinner each enjoyed a level of national and international recognition that was matched by few others in the social sciences. Many Americans became fascinated with their visions of humanity and society in the postwar decades. Their continued influence in the late twentieth century forced professionals in the human sciences to re-assess how Skinner and Mead should be portrayed in the histories of their respective disciplines. An examination of their efforts to promote and popularize contrasting visions of humanity thus provides a rich understanding not only of changes in cultural identity in postwar America but also of the manner in which theories of humanity and community were reconstituted by scientists in order to meet new public demands for techniques in individual and collective social adjustment. In the case of

Mead and Skinner, an analysis of their published opinions and social manifestos will serve as a historical guide to the American struggle to redefine traditional images of self and society in the decades after the Second World War.

Historians, philosophers, literary scholars, and social scientists all have confronted the question of the individual, or "self," in modern times. While philosophers have discussed the epistemology and ontology of the self, historians have, quite naturally, sought to historicize ideas about the self, examining their evolution throughout the history of western civilization.[4] As historian Roy Porter has noted, the question of how to define the self has undergone innumerable transformations in the twentieth century as moderns have learned to cope with industrialized living and with revelations from the social sciences. In the American context, Porter cites world wars, economic depression, the rise of professional social science, intellectual and literary post-modernism and deconstructionism, and the awareness of non-western cultural traditions, as figuring prominently in our ongoing discourse on the self.[5] Nikolas Rose has examined how the human sciences in particular have undermined traditional western definitions of the self.[6] Theories of human nature have been developed to fit a society that required definitions of

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[4] The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the rise of modern natural philosophy, René Descartes' famous disquisitions on the notion of being, and John Locke's observation that the self, while possessing a unique inner essence, was nonetheless a product of the social environment. In the nineteenth century the self was explored further in the emergent discipline of psychology through, for example, Sigmund Freud's concept of the unconscious mind and William James' speculations on radical empiricism and expanded sensory perception. Examples of how the self was defined in different eras of Western history are found in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Merle Curti, *Human Nature in American Thought: A History* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1980). See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[5] See Roy Porter's comments in the introduction to *Rewriting the Self*, 11-12.

[6] Nikolas Rose, "Assembling the Modern Self," in *Rewriting the Self*, 224-48. See the extended discussion in Rose's book, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

personality, intelligence, behavior, and development compatible with bureaucratic and industrialized social systems. In Rose's view, our modern definitions of the self came from non-academic settings -- factories, prisons, and classrooms.

Just as historians have sought to understand the self in context, recent scholars have called for culturally contextualized histories of the social sciences. A study of the postwar self as constructed by two prominent social scientists and public intellectuals contributes to both the history of the self and the history of the social sciences, as well as the history of interactions between elite/professional knowledge and broader understandings. The definition of the "self" in the present study thus has scientific and cultural dimensions.[7] Far from having any universal definition, the self, as Cushman says, has been historically defined according to the localized mores of a given culture. The "interpretive hermeneutical definition of the self," thus also includes, in the American context, the "indigenous psychology" of a society as part of the context-driven definition of self. Both the mechanistic and holistic selves in the respective works of Skinner and Mead are expressions of what Cushman calls cultural "artifacts" that represent different demands on the individual in American postwar society.[8]

By examining the reciprocal exchange and appropriation of social scientific and popular images of the self, as defined above, in the postwar decades, this study contributes to a growing corpus of historiography that examines modern American social science in cultural context. My contention is that new approaches to human personality during this crucial period in American history were not merely a consequence of

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[7] Philip Cushman, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

[8] Ibid., 23.

experimental inventiveness or interdisciplinary synthesis but also an outgrowth of contrasting social visions among scientists themselves. These distinct social visions had their roots in divergent mechanistic and holistic visions of the self, differences that were amplified by the broader cultural processes of American urbanization, industrial expansion, and the politics of social reform movements of the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries. It is thus appropriate to preface my discussion of Skinner and Mead with an overview of these early trends in scientific social management.

Progressive Roots of the Modern Self: Competing Perspectives on Scientific Social Reform at the Turn of the Century

Our modern visions of society and the self have their origins in a host of interconnected social, economic, and intellectual transformations that took shape in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the United States. Modern conceptualizations of the individual in society can be linked to changes in patterns of family, work, and community that followed in the wake of industrial expansion and urbanization after Reconstruction. With urbanization came the problem of managing increasingly diverse and complex human environments.

Many historians have discussed the widespread dislocation that accompanied the abandonment of traditional American folkways during this period and the difficulties of adjusting to a new urban existence that lacked the familiar social structure of small town life. Traditional family networks were disrupted, and older systems of community maintenance became obsolete in cities where socioeconomic mobility was the model of success. Conversely, the late nineteenth century, as Robert Wiebe and Daniel Rodgers

have noted, also saw cultural, industrial, and political fragmentation in the absence of a comprehensive national plan for managing urbanization.[9] There was at first no blueprint for building urban infrastructure, no set of methods to make urban life run well. Cities and their boroughs were sectioned, for example, according to predominant local industries, leaving civic administration to the whims of industrial capitalists. There was often no coordination of municipal systems for waste disposal, public transportation, medical care, and utilities by city government, and no clear understanding of what city governments should regulate.[10]

Urbanization also saw fundamental changes in the social values of the emerging professional classes. Many urbanites continued to look to the idyllic small town in locating their cultural heritage and in identifying the classic American virtues of democracy, independence, individual autonomy, and community solidarity.[11] In attempting to retain some semblance of this identity amidst a new urban environment, many Americans invested themselves in an expanding suburban culture. They embraced those moral and intellectual merits of professionalism in business management that were needed for success in conquering a new urban frontier and scaling its economic ladders.[12]

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[9] There were no regulatory standards for new industries and municipalities. The administration of urban social welfare often fell victim to the whims of unrestricted laissez faire economic practices, exploitative and wasteful "rule of thumb" techniques of industrial management and manufacturing, and the dictatorial "boss rule" syndicates of local politics. See Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1998) and Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967). For more discussion of the rural-to-urban transition in America see Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 76-124.

[10] Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 115-16.

[11] Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 1-10.

[12] Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 144-47. For further discussion see Eileen L. McDonagh, "Race, Class, and Gender in the Progressive Era: Restructuring State and Society," in *Progressivism and the New Democracy*, ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press,

Predictably, however, this came at the cost of traditional patterns of community maintenance. The complexity of the urban environment compelled individuals to relinquish direct control over their communities and place it in the hands of professional managers. Urbanites embraced bureaucracy on a grand scale and cultivated the social authority of scientifically inspired systems and ideologies of social management, although not without reservation. This need for organized administration, for research and development, for information and technical expertise, and for professionally trained 'scientists of society,' was reflected in the gradual transfer of social authority from families and communities to trained professionals and bureaucratic agencies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The American 'pioneer' virtues that had conquered the frontier -- individualism, frugality, and practicality -- were transformed by agencies of *collective* social management into the virtues of precision, control, self-reliance and restraint, and impeccable objectivity.[13]

Industrial expansion, urbanization, and the subsequent rise of the cults of bureaucracy and efficiency in the early twentieth century also shaped the concept of individual human nature. Thomas Haskell has noted that a greater awareness of the complex causal "interdependence" between the individual and industrial society

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1999), 145-91; *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era*, ed. Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991).

[13] Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 144-47. See also the comments by Blake McKelvey on this transition and on the embrace of the technical expert in his book, *The Urbanization of America [1860-1915]* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 266. McKelvey expertly explains the lack of national benchmarks as well as the political debates between local communities and states in standardizing education, municipalities, social services, utilities, and business/industrial management. Also consult the discussion of scientific objectivity and its connection to mechanical metaphors in Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, "The Image of Objectivity," *Representations* 40 (Fall, 1992): 81-129.

contributed to a need for systems of social management.[14] This increasingly environmental approach to human agency, in turn, led to fundamental reevaluations of human nature, morality, and individual autonomy. Evolutionary ideas, for example, were linked to visions of future societies, and social theorists such as Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer began to explore new moral, economic, and political theories. The psychologies of William James and Sigmund Freud also challenged the concept of a preordained and static human nature, as well as the complete existential autonomy of the individual.[15] Scientific attention gradually turned away from older concepts of the essences/faculties of "inner man" and toward the analysis of human behavior as determined by environmental and social conditions.[16] During the progressive era social scientists thus took greater measure of economic forces, history, human biology and biochemistry in tracing the causal connections between individual human behavior and society.[17]

The cultural and scientific underpinnings of Meadian anthropology and Skinnerian behaviorism have their origin in these nineteenth-century humanistic

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[14] Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth Century Crisis of Authority* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 42-44.

[15] Ibid., 245-46. See also the related comments by R. Laurence Moore, "Directions of Thought in Progressive America," in *The Progressive Era*, ed. Lewis L. Gould (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1974), 38-40. While James acknowledged the interdependence of the individual and the surrounding environment, he nevertheless argued against a positivist view of the self and society. James' voluntarist view of human agency stressed the significance of independent causal variables created by the individual in social and biological contexts. For James, the concept of individual will could be accommodated in psychology. His emphasis on the importance of studying individual uniqueness became a hallmark of humanist psychology in the twentieth century that was championed by social scientists such as John Dewey and Margaret Mead. Many first generation social scientists in the years leading up to the progressive era sought balance between positivist and voluntarist perspectives on human nature. See Haskell's comments on page 249. For more on James's philosophy see Haskell's references on page 246, note 12, to William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Longman's Greene, 1897).

[16] Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 148; Moore, "Directions of Thought," 38-40; McKelvey, *Urbanization*, 264.

[17] Haskell, *Emergence of Professional Social Science*, 251.

(voluntarist) and mechanistic (positivist) approaches to human nature in the social sciences. This particular theoretical and methodological bifurcation of perspectives on the self among different communities of researchers in the twentieth century was part of the broader public and professional responses to urbanization. The era of social reform movements in America between the late 1880s and the start of World War One thus figures prominently in tracing the origins of contrasting visions of the self and society that were represented in Mead and Skinner in the 1920s and 30s.

The transition between the agrarian populist movement of the 1890s and the era of progressive reform between 1900 and 1914 also saw the political migration of social management professionals into government and industry.[18] Although the political heart of populism was centered in the small rural town, a place that embodied the classic American individualist virtues of a life based in the land, the movement was actually a response to trends in rural-to-urban migration, immigration from Europe, corporatism, urban expansion, and widespread political corruption. Populism, as Richard Hofstadter argued, was an attempt to preserve a tradition of political democracy that began in the individualist economic structure of the farm setting.[19] As expressed by William Jennings Bryan and the Populist Party, and in the Social Gospel movement, both rural and urban interests forced the federal government into addressing the social and economic problems caused by industrialism. In the late nineteenth century members of the traditional professions (law, medicine, and clergy), along with laborers, were increasingly displaced

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[18] Richard Hofstadter discusses this transition in his classic study, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 92, 133.

[19] Ibid., 5-8.

by the power of corporate interests.[20] Both of these communities organized themselves into unions and professional societies in order to reclaim their access to capital and to political influence. Populism was not, however, an attempt to create social democracy, but, rather, a drive to expand public access to an industrialized economy.[21]

In the decade before the Great War, lawyers, engineers and technicians, businessmen, clergymen, and academics were able to gain control of the populist political leadership, bring it under a common "progressive" banner, and nationalize their political agenda during the Roosevelt administration.[22] Progressive politics upheld rural interests and championed democracy and the freedom of the individual. A paternalistic sense of social responsibility among urban professionals was coupled, however, to a healthy respect for the necessity of industry and corporatism in organizing urban life. Progressive leaders shared with their populist constituencies a desire to see corporate monopolies broken up and corruption in local government rooted out. But part of their motivation stemmed from the distinct professional advantages they felt were inherent in maintaining a well-regulated society; it would increase their chances of success in a growing economy.[23]

The progressive era saw the establishment of various grass roots movements among populists, moral reformers, and 'management' progressives dedicated to political, corporate, and municipal reform and regulation. Collectively, they fostered a broad public awareness of the social problems associated with the haphazard administration of

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[20] Ibid., 66, 92.

[21] Ibid., 10.

[22] Ibid., 131-33, 153-65.

[23] Ibid., 214.

organized labor, the factory, housing, and public works that had characterized a laissez faire capitalist economy in nineteenth-century America. The advent of the metropolis and mass culture also had given way to new dimensions of poverty, labor exploitation, and government corruption.[24] As a result, working-class activists, religious reformers, and middle-class professionals mobilized in support of corporate trust busting, the enactment of child labor laws, environmental resource conservation, food quality regulation, and the expansion of popular representation in government (primarily through public referendums, primaries, and direct elections). These are often counted among the many accomplishments of the social reform movements during the progressive era.[25]

Revisionist historians of progressivism, however, downplay the role of social activists and muckraking journalists in establishing actual regulatory reforms in the federal government. The drive to eradicate industrial exploitation and waste, as well as to curtail political corruption, Gabriel Kolko and Charles Noble have claimed, actually originated among the ranks of a fiscally and politically conservative elite of corporate managers.[26] Regulation may have served some progressive aims, Kolko observed, but its

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[24] Melvin G. Holli, "Urban Reform in the Progressive Era," in *The Progressive Era*, 133-52. See also Diner, *A Very Different Age*, 50-75 and John Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973).

[25] From an essay by the noted historian John C. Burnham for *Progressivism*, a set of essays edited by Burnham, John D. Buenker, and Robert M. Crunden (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc., 1977). See also the accounts of reformers and democratic reform movements in Kevin Mattson, *Creating A Democratic Public: The Struggle for Urban Participatory Democracy during the Progressive Era* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

[26] Gabriel Kolko characterized progressivism as an essentially conservative movement for this reason. See Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963). For further discussion of reform during the interwar and 1960s periods see Charles Noble, *Welfare As We Know It: A Political History of the American Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Noble suggests that radical political reform has never had a strong political power base or the capital resources to marshal a sustained influence over the tenor of legislation. Reformers usually have had to compromise with the power elite in industry.

negotiation actually took place among industrialists and politicians who were interested in preserving a corporate-centered political power structure. Most politicians of this era, including Theodore Roosevelt, believed in "political capitalism," or the role of government in helping to stabilize the national economy by catering to business interests. Regulation was in reality a way to consolidate and integrate industries and preserve their positions of power in the organization of major industries, public utilities, and municipalities. It also offset the decentralizing forces of regulatory initiatives among the states, as well as the radicalism of moral and populist progressives.[27] Roosevelt's Progressive Party privately upheld the need for strong corporate infrastructure while publicly preaching progressive social reform.

Ironically, as Daniel Rodgers has observed, it was political democracy that forestalled both radical reform on a national scale and the complete co-opting of public industries by private interests. American Progressives did not accomplish nearly as much social welfare reform as their European counterparts. American reform was gradual and non-uniform with few substantial changes made to the regulation of public works and city planning (other than reforms in zoning laws) by the early twentieth century. The overly ambitious aims of progressives to remake cities into "collective households" did not materialize, and urban reform took shape slowly through a combination of public and private interests working in close association with the federal government.[28]

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[27] Kolko, *Triumph of Conservatism*, 5-6, 76, 111, 205.

[28] Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 158-65. As the title of Rodgers' study indicates, Progressive reform in America must be examined in relation to international urban reform, especially in Britain, France, and Germany. Proponents of urban reform such as Henry C. Adams, Richard T. Ely, and Albert Shaw advocated comprehensive municipalization based on what they had seen of reform projects in European cities. Controlled by landed classes, European administrators instituted social welfare programs more efficiently than their American counterparts. See comments on pages 131-55.

Moreover, those among the middle ranks of urban planners, engineers, public administrators, and consultants were complicit in the consolidation of corporate power, since it provided them the opportunity to establish professional autonomy and 'expert' authority in their new roles as social managers.[29] These management-oriented progressives took up the task of making municipalities operate more efficiently. Consultants were enlisted to apply their technical and scientific skills to the streamlining of public works and corporations.[30] A collection of new regional and national administrative associations populated by these professionals formed in the 1890s in order to create national standards and procedures and secure greater professional autonomy.[31]

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[29] *The Progressive Era: Liberal Renaissance or Liberal Failure*, ed. Arthur Mann (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963). See especially the revisionist essays by Richard Hofstadter on this "status revolution" thesis of progressive reform, and that of William E. Leuchtenburg, "True Radicals," on the rise of the liberal elite. For more recent commentary on these organizations see Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 155. Also important to note here is the history of voting reform and the creation of the referendum as a form of direct legislation designed to check industrial interests. Although many historians have downplayed its effectiveness, Steven Piott notes that the referendum was instrumental in enacting legislation related to suffrage, direct primaries, recall elections, worker's compensation, child labor, the eight hour work week, public utilities regulation, and tax code improvements during the progressive era. See Steven Piott, *Giving Voters a Voice: The Origins of the Initiative and Referendum in America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 257.

[30] Holli, "Urban Reform in the Progressive Era," 133-52.

[31] Ibid., 135-42.

Among these administrative associations were the National Municipal League, The League of American Municipalities, The American Society for Municipal Improvements, The City Mangers' Association and the American League for Civic Improvements. Blake Mckelvey also notes that many of these early agencies grew out of privately run charity organizations and Social Gospel moral reform movements. These organizations eventually formed relationships with local governments and became the progenitors of social services agencies. For more on Social Gospel charities see Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988); Hoyt Landon Warner, *Reforming American Life in the Progressive Era* (New York: Pitman, 1971). Many administrative reform initiatives fell prey to political dissension, as Mckelvey says, "between the advocates of complete home rule and those who favored state regulation, between champions of a broad popular decision of all issues and the proponents of government by experts, between the believers in municipal socialism and the defenders of free enterprise." See Mckelvey, *Urbanization*, 254-57. Ultimately, state control won out over popular reform. Among progressives, there was also a cleavage between those who believed in democratic popular regulation and those who felt that municipalities should remain under the control of a managerial elite.

In addition to the expansion of urban municipalities and local, state, and federal governments, the progressive era was also marked by a public demand for scientific expediency in solving administrative problems connected to urbanization and industrialization.[32] Among those progressives who promoted the rationalization of industrial management, science and technology became the pathways to genuine and substantive social reform. By the early twentieth century the promotion of scientific expertise in civil affairs, business, and domestic life dominated much of the public discourse about reform ideology.[33] Theodore Roosevelt's natural resource conservation initiatives and his campaign for efficiency in government, for example, addressed the rationalization of resource management as a scientific endeavor, one that would ensure the preservation of a national industrial economy.[34] Indeed, as historian Samuel Hays argued, congressional debates over the proper uses of land, water, timber, coal, and other resources during Roosevelt's administration were over whether scientific experts or legislators should be in charge, and not the conservationist progressive concern with protecting natural spaces from greedy private interests.[35]

Scientists, Hays argued, wanted a system of resource management that was non-political and that centered on independent technical expertise. They were encouraged by a nationwide fascination with the scientific procedures of management and control in the

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[32] Burnham, *Progressivism*, 5.

[33] Ibid., 19; Gould, *Progressive Era*, ix.

[34] Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 1-5.

[35] Ibid., 142-46.

1910s.[36] Progressive legal scholars such as Louis Brandeis and liberal journalists such as Herbert Croly and Walter Lippmann believed that the rationalization of industrial processes was a blueprint for social harmony in American society. As proponents of scientific social management they argued that philanthropic institutions such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation should concentrate on developing scientific methods of social management.[37] Theodore Roosevelt, along with Croly and Lippmann, assented to Brandeis' notion of the cultivation of a competent managerial class and the use of the social "technologies" of scientific management.[38] As editors and contributors to the well-known progressive magazine, *The New Republic*, Croly and Lippmann championed the evolution of the administrative state as a necessary step in social progress. By focussing administrative controls on all areas of society, they claimed, the human potential of each individual would be maximized. Far from oppressing humanity, advocates of what came to be known simply as "Scientific

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[36] R. Laurence Moore, "Directions of Thought in Progressive America," 35-54; James Penick, Jr., "The Progressives and the Environment: Three Themes from the First Conservation Movement," in *The Progressive Era*, 115-32. See also a discussion of progressive social science in John C. Burnham, "Psychiatry, Psychology and the Progressive Movement," *American Quarterly* 12 (1960): 457-65.

[37] Brandeis' defense of efficient scientific management over increased labor benefits in the famous railroad industry Rate Case of 1910, for example, sparked a national efficiency craze that appealed to all manner of progressive labor advocates, humanitarians, educational reformers, and corporate muckrakers who saw the potential of scientific industrial management in harmonizing the needs of labor with the fiscal controls of big business. See Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era 1890-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964). Haber mentions that proponents of industrial betterment sought harmony between management and labor, citing the model program set up by John H. Patterson at the National Cash Register Company in the 1880s which incorporated cafeterias, medical care, recreation centers, company stores, and profit sharing in "Ruskinesque garden cites" for workers. See page 18. See Haber's references to Edwin L. Shuey, *Factory People and their Employers: How Their Relations Are Made Pleasant and Profitable* (New York: Lentilhon & Co., 1900); Richard T. Ely, "Industrial Betterment," *Harper's Monthly* 105 (September, 1902): 548-53; William Howe Tolman, *Industrial Betterment* (New York: W. H. Tolman, 1900). For a treatment of Herbert Croly see David W. Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic: The Life and Thought of an American Progressive* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985). See also Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Politics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913) and Louis D. Brandeis, *Other People's Money and How the Bankers Use It* (New York: F. A. Stokes, 1914); *Business -- A Profession* (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Company, 1914).

Management," argued that administrative specialization and diversity would end class divisions and alleviate social problems as well as preserve the heterogeneity of society by ridding it of older and more imprecise forms of social management.

Scientific Management was touted as the key to preserving, or rather, reinvigorating American democracy.[39] Its promise as a philosophy of social management attracted a number of high-profile progressive scholars and critics such as Thorstein Veblen, Lester Frank Ward, and John Dewey. All of them thought that humanitarian social aid, moral uplift, and the control of corporate greed might be realized through the scientific study and engineering of human relations, especially in the industrial setting.[40] They were divided, however, over the extent to which politics and the popular control of government should guide the formation of these new bureaucracies of social administration.[41] Some "technocrats" went so far as to support the complete separation of "inefficient" politics from the business of social administration in order to achieve

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[38] Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, 75-83.

[39] Haber observes, however, that despite this nominal support of democratic representation, the imposition of professional management actually worked against popular control. There was as attempt to distance administrative processes from public scrutiny, since many professionals felt that social management would run better without public interference. See Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, xii. See similar comments in Martin L. Schiesl, *The Politics of Efficiency: Municipal Administration and Reform in America 1800-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 47-87.

[40] As Haber notes, Croly had written at length on these issues in his famous progressive tract, *The Promise of American Life* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1909), where he argued that large-scale administrative social control would allow each individual's abilities to be properly integrated into the workings of complex society. Lippmann wrote in his books, *A Preface to Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913) and *Drift and Mastery* (New York: M. Kennerley, 1914), that class conflict could only be resolved by organizing industry more efficiently using the principles of Scientific Management. See Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, 82-96.

[41] Indeed, as James Kloppenberg has observed, there were serious limitations to progressive philosophy and journalism in practical matters. Despite the literary exhortations of those like Ely, Dewey, Croly, and Lippmann, American conventions and social ethics did not change. Here too, radicals could not offer a centralized and politically viable opposition. The clash of liberal and conservative interests left progressives with the sense that democracy was "an endless struggle." See James T. Kloppenberg,

effective control. This philosophy of organized administration, as will be demonstrated in the present study, would have widespread cultural reverberations throughout the twentieth century as it continued to challenge the place and face of the self.[42]

The Case of Frederick W. Taylor: A Turn- of-the-Century Pop Icon of Science and Technocratic Social Reform

The philosophy of Scientific Management found its most popular proponent in the late nineteenth-century industrial engineer, Frederick W. Taylor. His rise to national acclaim as an advocate of precision and efficiency in all industrial endeavors marks an important milestone in the history of social reform and of management theory that has shaped American culture in the twentieth century. There are, as I will argue, important links between the scientific social management movements at the turn of the century and the careers of B. F. Skinner and Margaret Mead in the decades before and after the Second World War. Taylorism, Scientific Management, and its modern technocratic counterparts have exerted a profound influence on American culture and the human sciences. Although often associated with industrial management, fiscal and political conservatism, and technocratic dehumanization, Taylorism's basic emphasis on taking a scientific approach to the organization and control of material and human resources was a societal goal to which both conservative (such as Herbert Hoover and Theodore Roosevelt) and liberal progressive (such as Brandeis, Croly, and Lippmann) reformers

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Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought 1870-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 415.

[42] This separation philosophy originated with Frank J. Goodnow, who argued that the administrative wings of government should act independently. See Haber, "The Politics of Efficiency," 99-116.

aspired. The story of Taylorism is also indicative of the same underlying tensions between contrasting visions of the modern self, the mechanistic and the holistic, which continued to evolve throughout the twentieth century in social science and society.

Taylorism and SM epitomized trends in American industry and society and contributed to the development of professional social science. The tendency of some historians to locate such broad cultural and scientific trends in the personage of any one individual, however, is always fraught with complications and contradictions. The story of Taylor is one among many that have their source in the rise of the modern American metropolis. What is intriguing about the specific case of Taylorism, as Martha Banta suggests, is that organized efforts to popularize the rubric (if not the specific techniques) of SM were incredibly successful.[43]

Although no direct professional or personal connection existed between Taylor and either Skinner or Mead, each capitalized on a public desire for scientifically inspired methods of *social engineering*. While each invoked a different image of the self, both images were touted as being "scientific," and both of their social philosophies found reception among public audiences. Like Taylor, Skinner invoked the principles of experimental science as a guide to human nature and society. As I will demonstrate, this proved attractive to various corporate and public institutions in the post-World War Two decades because they emphasized efficiency and active social management. Although dedicated to promoting scientific social management within a democratic government, Mead believed that a study of culture and individual psychology, rather than of human

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[43] Martha Banta, *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

behavioral efficiency, should guide the application of social science. Mead's theories of scientific social reform, unlike Skinner's, celebrated the uniqueness and diversity of humanity and culture, as well as the soundness of democratic political institutions that supported the individual. Her theories were attractive to various social democratic reform movements among women and the youth counterculture during the 1950s and 60s.

"Efficiency," as many progressive era historians have observed, became the watchword of much reform rhetoric. As a virtue of modern living it was thought to hold the solution to all social ills. "Efficiency," as the historian Samuel Haber declared, "meant social harmony and the leadership of the 'competent.'"[44] By far the most famous proponent of industrial and social efficiency, the originator and father of Scientific Management and the inspiration for the cult of efficiency, was the American engineer and inventor, Frederick W. Taylor (1856-1915). A mechanical engineer by training, Taylor rose to national celebrity with his 'expert' testimony in the Rate Case of 1910.[45] With the help of Louis Brandeis, Taylor's seminal tract, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), was brought to national fame during the railroad hearings with its serialization in the popular mainstream progressive periodical, *The American Magazine*. *Principles* gained wide public appeal not only as a commentary on the labor debates of the day, but also as an explication of science-inspired management principles that could be applied broadly in American society. Taylor was acknowledged as the leader of the "efficiency"

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[44] Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, ix.

[45] For more on this case see Hays, *Conservation* and Hugh G. J. Aitken, *Scientific Management in Action: Taylorism at Watertown Arsenal, 1908-1915* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

movement in business administration as well as the figurehead of the social phenomenon known as "Taylorism."[46]

Originally bound for Harvard College in the mid-1870s, Taylor instead rose through the ranks of the Midvale Steel Company in Philadelphia to become its chief engineer of production in the early 1880s. He later took his degree in mechanical engineering from the Stevens Institute of Technology. He first began his renowned time and motion studies of factory operations at Midvale where he used a stopwatch to analyze the efficiency of workers performing rote tasks. Out of these experiments evolved his industrial management philosophy. It focused on the meticulous quasi-scientific scrutiny of all the physical movements of workers in the factory. The breakdown of these processes into measurable parts, he demonstrated, offered shop managers and factory engineers a method for pinpointing and correcting production inefficiencies. In the 1890s Taylor was in high demand as a manufacturing consultant and lecturer. He became a prominent leader of a professional movement among industrial engineers affiliated with the new American Society of Mechanical Engineers to eradicate unscientific techniques of production in industry through the "systematic management" and rationalization of the factory environment.[47]

"Like most contemporary businessmen," the Taylor biographer, Daniel Nelson has observed, "Taylor equated social progress with technological progress. He had little regard for philanthropy and a low opinion of labor unions and their intellectual

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[46] Daniel Nelson, "The Making of a Progressive Engineer: Frederick W. Taylor," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 103-104 (October, 1979): 446-66. See pages 465-66.

[47] For an appraisal of this movement see Edward Layton, *The Revolt of the Engineers: Social Responsibility and the American Engineering Profession* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1971).

promoters."[48] Inasmuch as the *Principles* laid out Taylor's technical approach to manufacturing processes, it also incorporated a philosophy of labor management that distinguished between workers and 'expert' engineers, pointing to the inefficiency of allowing laborers to control the techniques of production. Implicit in Taylor's management philosophy was his transfer of administrative responsibility for all aspects of production into the hands of professionally trained engineers and efficiency consultants. These experts possessed scientific expertise to direct labor in the most efficient way. Taylor argued for the administrative autonomy of management scientists and engineers, not only in the factory, but also in all areas of industrial administration.

Taylor became known worldwide as "Mr. Scientific Management," a name as his most recent biographer, Robert Kanigel, observes, that "rival[ed] Edison or Ford."[49] With regard to his management philosophy, Taylor observed in the *Principles* that it was "no single element but rather the combination, that constitute[d] scientific management, which may be summarized as:

> Science, not rule of thumb.
> Harmony, not discord.
> Cooperation, not individualism.
> Maximum output, in place of restricted output.
> The development of each man to his greatest efficiency and prosperity."[50]

These principles reflected the new moral and civic values of urban life, and a departure from the rural individualist tradition. Science, as Taylor said, was the "grand equalizer"

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[48] Nelson, "Progressive Engineer," 449.

[49] Robert Kanigel, *The One Best Way: Frederick Winslow Taylor and the Enigma of Efficiency* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), 2.

[50] Frederick W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1998, c1911), 74.

in examining all factory operations and human relations. The subjection of human and mechanical processes to the rigors of scientific analysis, he claimed, made for a more efficient labor force and a fiscally responsible employer. Yet in this simple set of management maxims that extolled the primacy of the system, of production, and the maximization of human potential lay a powerful and influential rubric for progressive-style social reform -- it postulated no less than a science of society.

Indeed, as Taylor graduated from his professional role as an engineer to that of industrial reformer and aspiring social critic in the early 1910s, he geared the social technologies and inventions of Scientific Management[51] to attract the attention of progressive reformers. Written specifically for a lay audience, *Principles* was not a technical manual but a dramatic biographical account of SM's success in solving industrial problems. As Daniel Nelson has pointed out, it was precisely because Taylor made the *principles* of SM, rather than their technical application, the main subject of what was regarded as a "progressive manifesto" that Taylor's popularity soared in the coming decades.[52] As many Taylor historians and historians of management theory have observed, it was not Taylor's real-world application of SM but his appeal to scientific thinking and the scientific analysis of the factory environment that made a profound impact on the development of business administration theory.[53] SM's invocation of

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[51] Hereafter referred to as SM.

[52] Daniel Nelson, *Frederick W. Taylor and the Rise of Scientific Management* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 170.

[53] To fault Taylor for his failures as a business consultant, many observe, is to overlook his key contribution of a basic framework for the new sciences of management and control. See Kanigel, *One Best Way*, 13; Daniel Nelson, *Frederick W. Taylor*, 170-73; Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, ix-x; *Scientific Management: Frederick Winslow Taylor's Gift to the World?*, ed. J. C. Spender and Hugo J. Kijne (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996). See also the book by Charles D. Wrege and Ronald G. Greenwood, *Frederick*

scientific method, or a 'science-like' approach to society, in bringing simplicity and clarity to complex social phenomena, proved very appealing to management professionals.

As Kanigel notes, Taylor's impact on the workplace and on urban society at large was akin to the cultural and intellectual influence of Freudian psychology, Marxian economics, and Darwinian evolutionary theory. Taylor brought the cultural experiences of urbanization and progressive reform together in the ideological framework of SM. His contribution was not an original innovation in scientific research, but rather his promotion of what Kanigel has called the "scientific mindset." Taylor drew inspiration for his "laws" of management from the exact sciences; the rule of induction and experimentation determined the parameters of the factory and the nature of human relationships.[54] In turn, as Kanigel observes, the Taylorized factory represented for many progressives an ideal social microcosm; it was a model of an orderly and efficient social system.[55] Unlike other industrial icons such as Henry Ford, however, Taylor not only focused on increasing the improvement of the mechanical means of production but also on the direct control of *human beings* in order to improve their mechanical efficiency. His aim was to subject human behavior to the rigors of the *system*, as defined by science, and make them into efficient laboring machines.[56]

W. Taylor, The Father of Scientific Management: Myth and Reality (Homewood, IL: Business One Irwin, 1990).

[54] Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, x.

[55] See comments by Kanigel, *One Best Way*, 13, 18, 507-09.

[56] Kanigel notes this observation by the German historian Ulrich Wengenroth. See *One Best Way*, page 17.

As Anson Rabinbach has observed, Taylor was not the first scientist to invoke the "human motor" machine metaphor of humanity in discussing theories of social reform. Nineteenth-century European studies of "labor power" and efficiency in factories combined concepts of energy in thermodynamics and entropy theory with the idea of the human body as a reservoir of work.[57] What Rabinbach calls scientific and "transcendental materialism," the idea of reducing human activity to motion, energy, and productive output, became a key element in European social theory and reform politics. The battle against fatigue, the human analogy to entropy, found its counterpart in studies of human inefficiency by Taylor. While Europeans had employed the concept of the human motor and labor power in service of improving labor conditions, Taylorism emphasized managerial control. The result, many workers believed, was dehumanizing. The human motor concept in American industrial production theory became far more important than it was in Europe.[58]

As a general formula for industrial and social reform, however, SM attained widespread public appeal in the early 1910s. The Rate Case and the publication of *Principles* saw "Taylorism" sweep the nation in what came to be known as the social efficiency "craze."[59] When Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover spoke of governmental, industrial, and human wastefulness, the touted efficiency as an almost patriotic obligation. In the pages of such popular magazines as *System*, *The Efficient Age* and the *Ladies Home Journal*, and advice books such as Luther H. Gulick's *The Efficient*

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[57] Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origin of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 1-5.

[58] Ibid., 240-50.

[59] Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, 51-52.

Life (1913), efficiency in the workplace and the home was promoted for its morally uplifting qualities and as a sign of middle class success.[60] Housewives, for example, were encouraged to set up "efficiency stations" that would liberate them from inefficient housework. The tireless religious promoter, Reverend Charles Stelzle, took up SM as a way to increase the effectiveness of conversion campaigns. Educational administrators also became fascinated with SM as a way to centralize school management.[61] Associations of businessmen dedicated to management reform, such as the Rotary Club and the Taylor Society, were launched to promote the Taylorization of business management.[62]

Although the popular efficiency craze waned by the mid-1910s, scientific efficiency as a central concept of production, management, and control grew steadily in the 1920s and 30s and achieved international notoriety. As Secretary of the Department of Commerce, Herbert Hoover was among those ardent promoters of SM who campaigned against industrial and human resource wastefulness. Hoover advocated "associative" progressivism, an approach to social management that sought a cooperative balance between a free-market economy and government regulation.[63] He wanted to use existing trade and engineering associations to coordinate the scientific rationalization of American industries. In his famous "Waste in Industry" report of 1921 before the Committee on the Elimination of Waste in Industry of the Federated American Engineers

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[60] Ibid., 58.

[61] Ibid, 63-64.

[62] Ibid., 72.

[63] Ellis W. Hawley, "Herbert Hoover and Economic Stabilization, 1921-1922," in *Herbert Hoover as a Secretary of Commerce: Studies in New Era Thought and Practice*, ed. Ellis W. Hawley (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1981), 43-79. See pages 45 and 47.

Societies, Hoover called for the formation of a federal network of bureaus that would reorganize agriculture, housing construction, and the coal mining industry, and manage them under the aegis of the Department of Commerce.[64] Hoover launched the Foreign Trade Financing Corporation and the Division of Building and Housing in the Bureau of Standards. He also sponsored the Agricultural Credits Act, the first farm subsidy bill, to help the agriculture industry market and distribute food products more efficiently.[65]

By the end of the 1920s, SM had invaded all aspects of American life. Hoover's dream of a networked association of government bureaus, scientists, and industrialists never materialized, but the idea exerted strong influence on New Deal reform initiatives in the 1930s.[66] SM also helped to launch the 'cult of the expert' and the birth of what Walter Rautenstraush in the 1930s would term the "technocrat."[67] Inspired by Taylor-style progressive management theory, the technocracy movement of the 1930s promoted social management through strict adherence to engineering science and natural law (e. g.,

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[64] Hawley, "Hoover," 48. For a contemporary assessment of Hoover's work in the department see the preface to *Scientific Management since Taylor: A Collection of Authoritative Papers*, ed. Edward Eyre Hunt (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1924).

[65] Hawley, "Hoover," 50-56. Taylorism and Fordism also went international and were adopted by numerous industrialized states -- capitalist, communist, and fascist alike. Lenin, Trotsky, Mussolini, and Hitler were enthusiasts of Taylorism and saw SM as the key to modernizing factories and modeling society. National programs of efficiency in the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany were deeply influenced by Taylorism and Fordism. See Kanigel, *One Best Way*, 519-32. See as well the very informative discussion on Taylor and Ford and their influence on Soviet Russia and Germany in chapter six of Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm 1870-1970* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 249-94. The full incorporation of Taylorism and SM into Japanese manufacturing is also partly responsible for that country's industrial revolution in the twentieth century. For a history of Taylorism in the Japanese industrial revolution see William M. Tsutsui, *Manufacturing Ideology: Scientific Management in Twentieth Century Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Seishi Nakagawa, "Scientific Management and Japanese Management, 1910-1945," in *Scientific Management*, 163-80.

[66] Hawley, "Hoover," 45, 66. Hawley qualifies the extent of this influence, however, noting that the conservative Hoover, unlike FDR, did not advocate big government. His efficiency initiatives were designed to give most of the managerial power to industrial associations.

thermodynamics) and advocated the exclusive authority of technicians and scientists. Technocrats such as Howard Scott and Henry L. Ganntt argued that neither government nor business alone could run society efficiently. Society, they claimed, should be in the hands of engineers. Many organizations such as Technocracy Inc. (headed by Scott) were formed to help promote this philosophy.[68] Taylorism also helped foster a new wing of professional management specialties such as human relations, industrial engineering, and business management. American corporations started efficiency divisions, and new graduate programs in management were developed.[69]

Taylorism was never without its critics. A hero to management progressives and technocrats, Taylor was reviled by laborers who were subjected to his efficiency methods. From the beginning of Taylor's time and motion experiments in the 1880s, workers complained that his methods imposed a harsh pace of production. A year after the Rate Case of 1910, in response to labor protests, Taylor was called to defend his methods publicly before the House Committee Investigating the Taylor and Other Systems of Shop Management. The introduction of Taylor's time studies at the Watertown Arsenal in Massachusetts in 1911 had been met with a strike by the International Union of Molders, sparking a national controversy.[70] Far from being the

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[67] Kanigel, *One Best Way*, 486-90.

[68] For a contemporary appraisal of this movement and its philosophy see *For and Against Technocracy: A Symposium*, ed. Justus George Frederick (New York: Business bourse, 1933). For recent historical accounts see Beverly H. Burris, *Technocracy at Work* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993); Frank Fisher, *Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990); Donald Stabile, *Prophets of Order* (Boston: South End Press, 1984); Richard Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocrat Movement, 1900-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Henry Elsner, *The Technocrats: Prophets of Automation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1967).

[69] Kanigel, *One Best Way*, 486-90.

[70] Aitken, *Scientific Management in Action*, 6, 135, 184.

"Great Harmonizer" of labor and capital, Taylor was accused of treating men like machines and attempting to co-opt all of their initiative and individual autonomy in the workplace.[71] Time and motion experiments were banned at government-run munitions plants in 1915 as a result.[72] Nevertheless, as Hugh Aitken has observed, Taylorism as an organizational philosophy of production management had been firmly engrained in government factories despite the controversy. The Taylor Society modified its policy recommendations to accommodate labor cooperation with management. Taylorism had a profound impact on government industries as a whole in the 1910s and 20s and was incorporated into the Shipbuilding Labor Adjustment Board, the Board of Railroad Wages and Working Conditions, and the National War Labor Board.[73]

The potential evils of a "Taylored," or technocratic, society writ large were also explored in the 1920s and 30s by humanist social critics like D. H. Lawrence, John Dos Passos, George Orwell, and Aldous Huxley. In Evgenii Zamiatin's 1924 dystopian novel, *We*, fictitious "Taylor's Tables" of railroad schedules were expanded to subject every aspect of daily life to precise controls, and time was divided between that before Taylor ("B. T.") and after Taylor ("A. T.").[74] The implications of broad based social control that were symbolized in SM contradicted the assumption among many progressives like Veblen and Lippmann that the general advance of science and

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[71] Kanigel, *One Best Way*, 2-5, 533-36. Kanigel describes Taylor this way on page 17.

[72] Daniel Nelson, "Frederick W. Taylor and the Rise of Scientific Management," 164.

[73] Aitken, *Scientific Management*, 235-41.

[74] Kanigel here refers to Lawrence's descriptions of Taylorized factories in *Women in Love* (New York: Modern Library, 1922, c1920) and the more obvious references to Taylorization and social dystopia in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Doran, & Co., Inc., 1932) and George

technology (mechanical, social, or otherwise) would help preserve American democracy and counter the ravages of unchecked industrialization. Despite the expectation that democracy would be advanced by removing the inefficiencies of the older shop system, "industrial democracy" in the factory and society never materialized.

Anyone with direct experience of the thralldom of Taylorism or similar forms of industrial management understood that it was thoroughly anti-democratic, more compatible with a military social structure than anything else.[75] For progressive managers and engineers, as Haber observes, "[e]fficiency provided a standpoint from which those who had declared allegiance to democracy could resist the leveling tendencies of the principle of equality."[76] Taylorites countered such criticism with the assertion that the sacrifice of individual autonomy in the factory was necessary in order to preserve equal opportunity for all, and to allow individuals to move up the corporate ladder. Considering a nation now defined by *corporate* models of bureaucracy, technocracy, and the sciences of social administration, many humanists saw submission to the *system* and loss of individual autonomy as a Faustian bargain.[77] Taylorism nevertheless became ubiquitous in American industry after 1915. Industrial engineering

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Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four: A Novel* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1949). On John Dos Passos see Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis*, 188.

[75] Kanigel, *One Best Way*, 507-09, 514-18; Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, 25.

[76] Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, xii.

[77] As historian Harry Braverman observed, Taylorism was in fact an expression of the monopolistic capital management philosophy common to all industrial economies. The very nature of capital-based management favors profit over people, and it establishes control by breaking down production into its components, stripping labor of its specialized knowledge. The new "social processes" imposed by management, not the expansion of urban centers, Braverman claims, explains the success of Taylorism. See Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 68-73, 80-90. It should be noted, however, that the Soviet system also embraced Taylorism as a production philosophy.

and related areas of social sciences, disciplines that owed their existence to these management developments, moved from organizing production to studying the behavioral efficiency of workers themselves.[78]

Taylorism thus had perpetuated the mechanization of the worker that had begun in nineteenth-century labor theory, an evolution that continued well into the twentieth century.[79] World War One brought studies of human work related to "fatigue, production, industrial hygiene, and ergonomics" to the fore. Enthusiasm for these studies continued throughout the interwar period and fueled the technocratic social visions of politicians, philosophers, and social scientists.[80] The 'scientization' of human nature and potential, moreover, contributed to what Rabinbach has termed an American "paradigm of social modernity" that was at the center of reform debates and welfare initiatives.

The Great War ended many of the reform movements inspired by the politics of progressivism, but it did not dampen enthusiasm for social management ideology or what historian Guy Alchon has described as the technocratic mindset among social science professionals, private philanthropists, and highly placed government officials (such as Herbert Hoover) in the 1920s who advocated the streamlining of bureaucracy through scientific, particularly statistical, analysis of social and economic phenomena.[81] When interest in government sponsorship of such studies waned after the second world war, professionals in economics, social work, municipal administration, and engineering

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[78] Ibid., 140.

[79] Braverman, *Labor*, 180; Aitken, *The Human Motor*, 272.

[80] Ibid.

[81] See Guy Alchon, *The Invisible Hand of Planning: Capitalism, Social Science, and the State in the 1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

turned to private philanthropic organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation for financial support in building research centers dedicated to national planning. Much of the impetus in creating such privately funded centers as the National Bureau of Economic Reform and the Federation of American Engineering Societies was to generate much needed data on such things as business and unemployment cycles. The Taylorites, along with the American Economics Association and the American Statistics Association and other professional groups, lobbied for such research and for government legislation.[82]

This is to say that Taylorism and SM were not the only sources of the technocratic worldview among progressives and professional managers in the 1920s who were advocating the rationalization of social management. Many groups lobbied for such reforms. Indeed, during the Great Depression in the 1930s, New Deal social welfare initiatives were heavily influenced by the ideology of scientific social management and technocratic planning that had gained momentum in the 1920s and became part of what Richard Hofstadter has described as a period of economic "intervention" and "experimentation" in the 1930s. Debates over reform weighed the merits of scientific rationalization for economic preservation against the need to protect the rights of the individual.[83] These discussions, in turn, mirrored the tensions between mechanistic and holistic visions of the self in Interwar and postwar social science, tensions that Skinner, in particular, would focus on in his challenge to American polity and democracy in the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s.

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Rabinbach characterizes social welfare debates this way in *Human Motor*, 273. See also the comments by Richard Hofstadter in *Age of Reform*, 273-315.

The Rise of Modern Social Science and Competing Pathways of Social Reform

John C. Burnham and Burton Bledstein have examined the close relationship between professional development and scientific praxis in progressive-era reform movements. Professionalism in social administration, the desire for expertise, opened up new opportunities for academics, especially in the social sciences. During the first two decades of the twentieth century progressives were allied increasingly with the emerging disciplines of political science, economics, sociology, psychiatry, and psychology. Scholars and scientists in these fields provided the theoretical tools and the intellectual authority necessary to bring reform schemes into reality. Many scientists in these fields retooled their research methods, epistemologies, and technical applications to reflect the basic goals of progressive social reform; this entailed the prediction and control of social phenomena.[84] Indeed, the idea that human environments could be engineered to improve humankind was essential to both progressive reform and the professional expansion of social science. Social scientists, mechanists and humanists alike, in the early twentieth century shared in the universal progressive dedication to municipal and civic stewardship and the mission to create techniques of social management and control. Indeed, with regard to progressive and social scientific visions of the self, it is important to recognize that these perspectives on human nature and social organization varied widely and were combined in different way to produce a host of different permutations and interpretations.

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[84] Burnham, "Psychiatry, Psychology and the Progressive Movement," 457; Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976), 112-27, 326-27.

Skinner's and Mead's visions of the self, although diametrically opposed to one another, are only two among many examples in a continuum in the social sciences.

Dorothy Ross has noted that the confluence of historical and evolutionary perspectives in science and political theory, and an awareness of emerging social forces (market capitalism, social diversification, industrial expansion), had a transforming effect on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century medical and social science. American modernist ideology reflected change and transition in society, and the social sciences embraced a neo-positivist appreciation for its lawful nature, especially, for example, in sociology.[85] In the therapeutic sciences such as psychiatry, organicism and scientific materialism relocated mental disease in the nervous system; physical defects were at the heart of any mental ailment.[86] Conversely, the restorative virtues of psychotherapy also began to be included in diagnostic training. Medical professionals saw that improving the mental health of patients might also be a matter of environment and social adjustment rather than merely of heredity or disease.[87] Psychotherapists moved away from a hereditarian view of human nature and were especially zealous in their efforts to promote better environments for children to prevent delinquency and mental illness.

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[85] Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 146-47. Ross notes that these perspectives were exemplified in the sociologies of Albion Small and Franklin Giddings, who, along with other academics in economics and political science, were deeply influenced by such tracts as Karl Pearson's *Grammar of Science* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892) that outlined a neo-positive approach to human nature. See Ross's summary article "Modernist Social Science in the Land of the New/Old," in *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870-1930*, ed. Dorothy Ross (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 171-89.

[86] Burnham, "Psychiatry, Psychology and the Progressive Movement," 459.

[87] Ibid., 461. See also Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity -- Environment Controversy, 1900-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

Social science progressives employed a future-oriented, liberal-historical perspective that emphasized a break with the past to revitalize American exceptionalism and relocate individualism in theories of social order and control. Social scientific professionalization and specialization helped to shift the focus of theory, however, from broad social evolutionary models to research on short-term changes in the 1920s and 30s when technocratic visions of social management became popular and statistical methodology ruled the day. Technocratic social theory embodied the belief that the principles of science themselves could serve as a guide to social reconstruction and alleviate the need for extensive political debate.[88]

It has been generally acknowledged that the rise of the behavioral perspective on human nature was central to the creation of modern American psychology. John B. Watson (1878-1958) is often hailed as the champion of the behavioral movement that sought to rid psychology of introspection and useless theorizing in order to achieve prediction and control over human behavior.[89] Watson developed his science with an eye toward practical social applications.[90] But as John Mills and Franz Samelson have argued, it is a mistake to assume that Watsonian behaviorism inaugurated the behaviorist perspective.[91] Quite the contrary, progressivism created the American behaviorist

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[88] Ross, *Origins*, 244-50, 387.

[89] Burnham, "Psychiatry, Psychology and the Progressive Movement," 462.

[90] For an overview of these characteristics see the introduction to John A. Mills, *Control: A History of Behavioral Psychology* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

[91] For more on the roots of the behavioral perspective in American social science see Kerry W. Buckley, *Mechanical Man: John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1989); John Mills, *Control: A History of Behavioral Psychology*; Franz Samelson, "Organizing for the Kingdom of Behavior: Academic Battles and Organizational Policies in the Twenties," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 21 (1985): 33-47; Franz Samelson, "Struggle for Scientific Authority: The Reception of Watson's Behaviorism, 1913-1920," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 17 (1981): 399-425.

perspective, and it pervaded all the social sciences in the 1920s; psychology was but one affected branch. The disciplines of economics, political science, and sociology also reflected the behaviorist approach to individual and social dynamics.

In the methodological and research context of modern social science the mechanistic view of the individual made the control of human nature more direct, immediate, and mathematically precise than therapeutic techniques. It is thus no coincidence that social scientists by and large adopted the mechanistic approach to the self in the opening decades of the twentieth century. The mechanistic approach provided the best opportunity for crafting social technologies and institutionalizing the professions. Yet, as Skinner and Mead would learn in the course of their early training in science, assent to a mechanistic vision of the self in the study of humanity entailed a vision of social reform that fundamentally challenged democracy. As a radical behaviorist, Skinner embraced Tayloresque inductivism and a technocratic vision of social progress. Mead, however, opted for a revised scientific methodology wherein social science would preserve democracy and the dignity of the individual.

Democracy was challenged, however, during the Great Depression and the Second World War. As Mark Smith has observed, social scientists searched for their "normative" roles in society in the 1930s. Some (like Skinner) preferred the objective purity of methodology and technique, while others (like Mead) sought a broader participatory role for social science.[92] Along with many of their colleagues, Skinner and

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[92] Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918-1941* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 256-57. For more on the political activism among social scientists in the 1930s see Peter J. Kuznick, *Beyond the Laboratory: Scientists As Political Activists in 1930s America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Mead believed that political reform and social progress in the postwar decades would stand in direct relation to social science. What vision of the self and what kind of science of society, they asked, would Americans need? As with a study of Taylorism, the pertinent historical question is why Skinnerism and Meadism became popular. How did these prominent social scientists tap into the American affinity for 'system' in organizing modern life? Why, in other words, did Mead and Skinner themselves seem to be reflections of the American cultural experience?

B. F. Skinner and the "Taylorization" of Behavioral Psychology

For B. F. Skinner, professional isolation in experimental psychology during the Interwar years gave way in the postwar decades to a public fascination with his mechanical technologies of behavior modification, and his radical brand of social theory. Recently, Laurence Smith, William Woodward and other historians of psychology have argued that behavioral psychology, particularly the career of Skinner, should be addressed as cultural phenomena in and of themselves.[93] Skinner's social philosophy reflected the modern embrace of technology as part of our collective and individual identity. He is, as Woodward argued, the "embodiment of a technological ideal," that has been incorporated into innumerable areas of education, medicine, business and

[93] William R. Woodward, "Skinner and Behaviorism as Cultural Icons: From Local Knowledge to Reader Reception," 7-34, especially pages 8 and 21, and Laurence D. Smith, "Situating B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture," 294-315, in *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, ed. Laurence D. Smith and William R. Woodward (London: Associated University Presses, 1996). Woodward also notes the proliferation of academic journals dedicated to exploring behaviorism's influence on economic, political, philosophical, and medical thought. The essays in Smith and Woodward, which are addressed further here and in the next chapter, most aptly represent the new scholarship on Skinner that attempts to evaluate his influence on American culture.

science.[94] The challenge in studying Skinner, then, is to get beyond his iconic status in behavioral psychology, a mythology that he himself helped construct, and explore how he was received in the public, and how he himself reflected trends in American culture.[95] That challenge is taken up as part of the present study.

My analysis of Skinner's career contributes to a historiography that examines the popular reception of Skinnerian behaviorism and social theory. It places Skinner squarely within the context of broader trends in postwar American culture. These trends include urbanization and the rise of social planning in the early 20th century mentioned in the previous section, as well as the response of professional social science to such trends. I contend that the examination of contrasting public articulations of mechanistic and holistic images of the self, as presented in this analysis, carries us farther down the path toward understanding Skinner as a cultural phenomenon.

The ideal of social efficiency and the desire for scientific expertise in the urban environment were part of a reform ideology, as we have seen, that exerted considerable influence on the evolution of the behavioral perspective in psychology in the 1920s when Skinner began his career in science.[96] Nils Wiklander has effectively demonstrated that Skinner's aspirations toward a science of social reform began well before the publication of his seminal tracts on behavioral social theory in the 1940s. Their true roots, he claims,

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[94] Woodward, "Skinner and Behaviorism as Cultural Icons," 8.

[95] Ibid., 9. It should be noted that Woodward views the studies in Smith and Woodward et al. as part of the sociology of science, a literature that has contributed significantly to the history of science over the past two decades. Although my study addressed the core of this historiography, my intent is to present a cultural history of Skinner that forges links to the historiography of American cultural history.

[96] Laurence Smith summarizes the historiography on this connection in relation to Skinner's status as a cultural "product." See Smith, "Situating B. F. Skinner," 298.

lay in his reaction to progressive and neo-progressive reform movements in the early twentieth century.[97]

Skinner's desire to apply the behavioral techniques honed in the laboratory to projects in social engineering was originally inspired by what the social critic Louis Berman described in the 1920s as a the "religion" of behaviorism, similar to the efficiency craze at the turn of the century.[98] Skinner's early experiments with reform rhetoric and social criticism came during his "dark period" in the year before he began studying psychology. His awareness of the limitations on political and philanthropic social planning during the 1920s contributed to his early embrace of science (inspired by his reading of H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, John B. Watson, and others) as the basis of social reform. Wiklander demonstrates that Skinner's experimental overhaul of behaviorism in the 1930s was fueled by his long held aspiration toward a behavioral science of society.[99] When Skinner moved to recast the methodology and epistemology of behavioral psychology in the late 1930s, his research gave rise to a radical behaviorism that emphasized the experimental mastery of the environment, and thus over the

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[97] Nils Wiklander, "From Hamilton College to Walden Two: An Inquiry into B. F. Skinner's Early Social Philosophy," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, 83-105. For more on Skinner's "Dark year" experiments in 1926 with a career in writing and social criticism see chapter three, "A Hill of Dreams" in Daniel W. Bjork, *B. F. Skinner: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 54-75; Alan C. Elms, "Skinner's Dark Year and Walden Two," *American Psychologist* 36 (1981): 470-79; S. R. Coleman, "B. F. Skinner, 1926-1928: From Literature to Psychology," *The Behavior Analyst* 8 (1985): 77-92.

[98] Louis Berman, *The Religion Called Behaviorism* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927).

[99] More specifically, Wiklander points to archival evidence that documents Skinner's early plans for this science. Along with Carl Murchison and Warren Weaver, for example, Skinner participated in a 1934 work group sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation where he explored the use of verbal behavior studies as the key to managing human affairs. Wiklander also points to unpublished writings on behavioral epistemology that are squarely focused on the scientific investigation of human nature. See Wiklander's references to Skinner's 1932 "Sketch for an Epistemology," on page 103, note 62, and the published version of his article "The Generic Nature of the Concepts of Stimulus and Response," *Journal of General Psychology* 12 (1935): 40-65, in note 63.

organism. This shift in perspective proved very successful, establishing Skinner as a prominent experimental psychologist by the late 1940s.

The origins of Skinner's operant behaviorism and his philosophy of science also can be traced to his exposure as a young man to the inductivism of Francis Bacon, his reading of the behaviorist John B. Watson, and his exposure in college and graduate school to the experimental reductionism of the physiologists Ernst Mach, Jacques Loeb, and Ivan Pavlov. Skinner began his formal training in psychology at Harvard at a pivotal time in the development of experimental psychology. Psychology as a distinct discipline by this time was farther removed from its ties with philosophy and the intellectual heritage of metaphysics.[100] With the spread of physicalism and reductionism in science in the 1910s and 1920s, many American psychologists began to explore the mechanical and biological dimensions of psychological phenomena. John B. Watson introduced the profession and the public to this behavioral psychology in his seminal text of 1925, *Behaviorism*. He presented an experimental methodology for psychology that was inspired by the physical sciences. It emphasized the precise measurement and control of

[100] This transition has of late received extensive treatment by historians of American psychology. The history of behaviorism is in many respects a chronicle of the drive to move psychology away from introspective and philosophical speculation and towards quantification and the laboratory. For a recent discussion of contemporary debates over the connections between mind and body and how to approach this question experimentally, see Nadine M. Weidman, *Constructing Scientific Psychology: Karl Lashley's Mind-Body Debates* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Dorothy Ross has addressed the movement of political science, sociology, and economics into empirical and scientific investigation in the late nineteenth century. Consult her article, "The Development of the Social Sciences in America, 1860-1920," in *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America*, ed. Alexandra Oleson and John Voss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 107-38 as well as her full exposition in *The Origins of American Social Science*. For an overview of professional development in psychology during the formative years of the 1920s see Michael M. Sokal, "James McKeen Cattell and American Sociology in the 1920s," in *Explorations in the History of Psychology in the United States*, ed. Joseph Brozek (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1984), 273-323 and James H. Capshew, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice, and Professional Identity in America, 1929-1969* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

behavior.[101] Skinner's indoctrination into psychology at Harvard in 1928 reflected the confluence of these trends and ideas.

As Laurence Smith has observed, Skinner's philosophy of science traces its origins to Baconian natural philosophy and an exclusive adherence to the observation and description of physical phenomena.[102] Like Bacon's, Skinner's scientific epistemology was firmly rooted in the assumption that the study of natural order lay in the exhaustive accumulation of factual information. Bacon's main contribution to the Scientific Revolution in the seventeenth century was his rejection of artificial systems of classification and language that were used to explain natural phenomena. Bacon's *New Organon* (1620) outlined a natural philosophy constructed from the gradual accumulation of facts and the careful delineation of inductive inferences, or "middle axioms," about natural law. "As for those who have given the first place to Logic," Bacon asserted,

> supposing that the surest helps to the sciences were to be found in that, they have indeed most truly and excellently perceived that the human intellect left to its own course is not to be trusted; but then the remedy is altogether too weak for the disease; nor is it without evil itself. For the logic which is received, though it be very properly applied to civil business and to those arts which rest in discourse and opinion, is not nearly subtle enough to deal with nature; and in offering at what it cannot master, has done more to establish and perpetuate error than to open the way to truth ... This doctrine then of the expurgation of the intellect to qualify it for dealing with truth, is comprised in three refutations: the refutation of the Philosophies; the refutation of the Demonstrations; and the refutation of the Natural Human Reason.[103]

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[101] John B. Watson, *Behaviorism* (New York: The People's Institute Publishing Co., Inc., 1925).

[102] Laurence Smith has discussed the relationship between Baconian philosophy of science and Skinner's behaviorism in his book, *Behaviorism and Logical Positivism: A Reassessment of the Alliance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986). See also his concise summation in Smith, "Knowledge as Power: The Baconian Roots of Skinner's Social Meliorism," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, 56-82.

[103] These statements come from Bacon's introduction to the *New Organon* entitled *The Great Instauration*. See Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration*, ed. Jerry Weinberger (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1980), 12, 25.

Skinner, like Bacon, Smith asserts, was skeptical of the explanatory efficacy of metaphysics, and he opted instead to concentrate on describing the physical regularities in nature.

More contemporary figures such as the physicist/physiologist Ernst Mach and the biologist Jacques Loeb exerted considerable influence on Skinner's approach to animal and human behavior.[104] As a student at Hamilton College in the early 1920s, Skinner encountered Mach, a proponent of scientific empiricism and logical positivism, in a history of science course taught by George Sarton. Skinner read *The Science of Mechanics* (1893) and was deeply affected by Mach's views on the essence and purpose of science.[105] Mach shared Bacon's distaste for metaphysical speculation in science and his desire to rid scientific language and theory construction of philosophical 'impurities.'[106] Mach's idea of causality also was similar to Bacon's notion of the descriptive laws of nature. Mach described causality strictly in terms of mathematical correlation between different sets of empirical data, correlations that had predictive value and utility. The ultimate aim of science, according to Bacon, was to obtain mastery over the natural world for the benefit of humankind. The functions of science and technology were thus the same. Mach expressed this utilitarian view of science in Darwinian terms.

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[104] See the introductory essay in *Modern Perspectives on B. F. Skinner and Contemporary Behaviorism*, ed. by James T. Todd and Edward K. Morris (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), xxi – xxviii. Of particular note is the illustration of Skinner's intellectual "family tree" on page xxii. On the intellectual heritage of radical behaviorism see Eckart Scheerer, "Radical Behaviorism: Excerpts From a Textbook Treatment," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, 151-75. For more on Mach's influence in the sciences see J. T. Blackmore, *Ernst Mach: His Work, Life, and Influence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) and J. Bradley, *Mach's Philosophy of Science* (London: Athlone Press, 1971).

[105] Bjork, *Skinner*, 100.

[106] Smith, *Reassessment*, 42.

Science, he surmised, had evolved as a tool that aided human adaptation to the environment, organizing and channeling nature to productive ends. This goal for science -- the establishment of control over natural phenomena -- would come to define B. F. Skinner's scientific and social-philosophical perspective.

Skinner entered the graduate program in psychology at Harvard in 1928. There he studied both psychology and physiology and initially found the latter to offer better opportunities for conducting experimental research. His courses in physiology with Hudson Hoagland and William Crozier provided a steady diet of experimentation in the reflexes and reaction rates of animal subjects.[107] Crozier had himself been deeply influenced by his own mentor and Machian disciple, the physiologist Jacques Loeb.[108] Although Skinner had read Loeb's *Comparative Physiology of the Brain* (1900) and *The Mechanistic Conception of Life* (1912) as an undergraduate, it was with Crozier that Skinner began to explore the possibilities for a scientific study of behavior, one based on the whole organism rather than its dissected parts (as was the case in Ivan Pavlov's studies).[109]

Undoubtedly Skinner found much to admire in Loeb's technical approach to experimental science and the control of biological processes. Loeb's investigations in the 1880s of plant and animal tropism and his success with artificial parthenogenesis stemmed from his thoroughly positivistic approach to natural phenomena. Through

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[107] Bjork, *Skinner*, 77.

[108] The most authoritative biography of Loeb to date is Philip J. Pauly, *Controlling Life: Jacques Loeb and the Engineering Ideal in Biology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For a more recent appraisal see, Charles Rasmussen, *Jacques Loeb, His Science and Social Activism and Their Philosophical Foundations* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998).

[109] Bjork, *Skinner*, 65.

direct manipulation of cellular and animal behavior, using physical and chemical modification, Loeb concluded that biochemistry, rather than the broad, speculative study of evolutionary and physiological processes, was the key to making a precise and efficacious science of biology.

Loeb rejected mentalism, as did Skinner later on. Environmental conditions and biochemistry, Loeb believed, defined the organism more tangibly than any theory of consciousness, will, or volition.[110] Loeb's pragmatic and mechanically inspired view of life focused on the isolation and manipulation of biological processes rather than the comprehensive understanding of nature. The *control* of biological processes became the goal of his experimental biology. Well into the twentieth century Loeb's views on an experiment-centered life science was the center of a debate among biologists over the merits of mechanism versus holism in explaining natural phenomena.[111] The mechanistic orientation in the experimental analysis of behavior exerted a powerful influence on the biological and social sciences. As the historian of biology, Philip Pauly, has observed, an engineering approach to life, and an emphasis upon the control of natural processes in

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[110] Jacques Loeb, *Comparative Physiology of the Brain and Comparative Psychology* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), especially chapter one, "Some Fundamental Facts and Conceptions Concerning the Comparative Physiology of the Central Nervous System." See also Loeb, *The Mechanistic Conception of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912).

[111] One of the early high-profile challenges to Loeb's *The Mechanistic Conception of Life* came from the physiologist Herbert S. Jennings, who argued the merits of a natural historical model of behavior as an evolutionary adaptive mechanism. The Loeb/Jennings debates of the late nineteenth century signified the ongoing battle between those who embraced the new science of biochemistry and the methodology of laboratory experimentation, and those devoted to traditional natural historical biology (dominated by Darwinian evolutionary theory). The ensuing dominance of mechanism in experimental biology is indicated in debates among cytologists. In his rebuttal to Loeb, *The Biology of the Cell Surface* (Philadelphia: P. Blackiston, 1939), Ernest E. Just opposed the reduction of cell biology to physics and chemistry. Similar debates about the proper scope of scientific inquiry, the historical and comprehensive versus the experimental and process-specific, influenced behavioral psychology as well. See Philip J. Pauly, "The Loeb Jennings Debate and the Science of Animal Behavior," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 17 (1981): 504-15 and Kenneth R. Manning, *Black Apollo of Science: The Life of Earnest Everett Just* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

laboratory science, was championed in psychology by Loeb's protégé, John B. Watson.[112]

In Skinner's first extended treatment of experimental behaviorism, *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis* (1938), the influence of Bacon and the mechanistic physiologists was clear. The book adhered strictly to what Laurence Smith has termed a *descriptive positivism*, relying solely on the measurement of external behavior, with no appeal to nonphysical internal states. As did Mach, Skinner confined his evaluation of behavioral 'laws' to the mathematical correlation of reflexes and response rates. And like Bacon, Skinner took pains to rid his behavioral descriptions of any inaccurate or vague terminology that did not contribute directly to the results of experimental findings.[113] Like Bacon, Mach, and Loeb, Skinner's ultimate aim was to establish control over behavior so that organisms might be shaped.

The innovation of Watsonian behaviorism was that it had excluded consideration of inner psychological states and introspection. All behavior thus originated in external stimuli which, in turn, induced a physical or physiological response in the organism. The active reinforcement of a response using direct stimuli constituted classical conditioning. The neobehaviorists Edward Tolman and Clark Hull, however, further confined behavioral theory to operational definitions by invoking logical positivism. Neobehaviorists used nonhuman subjects for greater experimental control, postulating that perception and learning differences between humans and animals were of degree not

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[112] See Philip J. Pauly, *Controlling Life.*

[113] B. F. Skinner, The *Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1938), 7.

kind. Experimental findings could be used in modifying human behavior. In both behaviorism and neobehaviorism, the learning process was the center of study, since it represented the core of adaptation. Using operational definitions the neobehaviorists explained behavior using both stimulus/response mechanisms and theories of internal drives, intervening mental variables, and operationally defined cognitive maps.[114]

Skinner's variation on neobehaviorism combined logical positivism with functional analysis and did away with postulating internal events altogether. In addition to getting rid of inner states and theories, Skinner also shifted experimentation away from cataloging stimulus/response relationships. His was a radical environmental approach that focused on the *consequences* of *spontaneous* behaviors emitted by the organism, treating them as the primary keys of experimental manipulation.

Skinner distinguished two types of behavior. *Respondent* behavior was elicited automatically by a particular stimulus. *Operant* behavior was spontaneous and required no external stimulus. The *consequences* of behavior could be defined as a "response-contingent" stimulus, and spontaneous behaviors could be termed *operants*. Consequences that encouraged a behavior could be used in positive reinforcement. Environmental *contingencies* thus set the conditions for behavior, not by applying stimulus to the organism, but by passively selecting out those spontaneous behaviors (variations) that were advantageous to the organism. In this sense, Skinner drew heavily from the Darwinian notion of natural selection. This revelation opened up endless possibilities for behavioral engineering. Just as the fixity of species concept was replaced

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[114] See the comparison of behaviorism and neobehaviorism in B. R. Hergenhahn, *An Introduction to the History of Psychology*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning), 371-401. The description of operant behaviorism in the text above is also from Hergenhahn.

by variation and natural selection, Skinner rendered the stimulus/response notions of classical conditioning obsolete. Moreover, operant behaviorism circumvented the need for negative/aversive reinforcement. Instead of punishing for unwanted behavior, the reinforcing contingencies could simply be removed until the behavior went "extinct."

Since operant behaviorism did not rely on maps of specific stimuli in controlling behavior, a new controlling variable was needed. By the early 1930s Skinner had noticed in his experiments with rats that the strength of a behavior was correlated with its response frequency. By manipulating its feeding schedules selectively, Skinner could control the rat's *response time* in pressing a lever on a food dispenser. Skinner realized that this spontaneous 'operant,' or lever pressing behavior, implied a mode of behavior selection based on environmental contingencies that affected response rates.[115] In a move reminiscent of Taylor's stopwatch experiments with factory laborers and the study of work efficiency, Skinner brought the key experimental variable of *time* into his research. By measuring the rates of repetition of operant behaviors, one could discern numerical regularities corresponding to general laws of behavior, not unlike those of natural selection.

By re-focusing his experimental attention on time and the role of the environment, just as Taylor had done, Skinner did away with the examination of the inner world of organisms. Since this inner world was not subject to direct scientific analysis and scrutiny, Skinner's reductive scientific epistemology moved the experimental focus *outside* the organism and described it in terms of environmental contingencies. Similarly, Taylor had shifted the focus of labor studies away from the worker (and all of his knowledge and skill) and toward the expert management of the work environment. This

same approach to the rat, in Skinner's case, vastly improved the manipulation of complex behaviors. Skinner's research also convinced him of the practical expediency of this shift in perspective. It embodied one of the hallmarks of good Baconian, and Taylorian, science. It established control over the organism, and did so in an efficient manner.

As Skinner moved from rats to pigeons in the late 1930s and early 40s he became convinced that the laws of operant behavior were essentially the same for all higher organisms. In each case it was a straightforward matter of defining environmental contingencies and learning how to manipulate them. The possibilities for designing and constructing complex repertoires of behavior seemed endless. Skinner's enthusiasm for the 'device' metaphor of animal nature became the centerpiece of his research with pigeons during the 1940s. His success in engineering pigeons to serve as devices for military applications during the Second World War eventually led him to consider the implications of his work for human behavior modification.

By the 1950s pigeons would become Skinner's experimental prototypes for human models of behavioral engineering. Like the neobehaviorists, Skinner believed that the processes of learning, defined operationally, were universal in all organisms and only varied in degrees of complexity. Amidst the chaos of war and the adjustment to what for most Americans was a radically new set of *cultural contingencies* in the postwar world, Skinner's enthusiasm for behavioral science blossomed into a full scale vision of social engineering. He explored this vision in the laboratory and in the literary genre of utopian fantasy. His early thoughts on these phenomena were explored in his utopian novel, *Walden Two* (1946), a tract that outlined the essential components of a science of human social engineering.

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[115] Bjork, *Skinner*, 106-07.

Skinner also began to test the cultural waters of postwar America, showcasing his Harvard research on pigeons and his invention of a new kind of domestic technology he called the "Baby Tender" in the popular press. In these public offerings, Skinner linked the marvels of behavior modification to the challenge of postwar American society. Skinner's career as a social theorist in the 1950s was characterized by considerable controversy. He critiqued traditional concepts of the autonomous, mind-centered, independent and self-contained individual. His defense of mechanistic humanity was met by both harsh criticism and marked curiosity among different constituencies of the professional and lay public.

Margaret Mead: From Psychology to an Anthropology of Social Reform

In contrast to B. F. Skinner's scientific objectivism, mechanism, and materialism in behavioral psychology, another community of professional social scientists that included the cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead opposed scientific reductionism in the study of human nature and society in the early twentieth century. As described by Katherine Pandora, these rebels in professional social science embraced perspectives on social reform that differed considerably from the managerial strain of progressivism.[116] Mead's early aspirations toward a socially relevant and politically viable science of humanity were shaped by the philosophical and scientific pragmatism of William James and the educational philosophy of John Dewey. The preservation of the individual and

[116] Katherine A. Pandora, *Rebels Within the Ranks: Psychologists' Critique of Scientific Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

the promotion of democracy were the hallmarks of Mead's reform agenda for social science.

In her anthropological studies of the 1920s and 30s Mead argued for a course of research that engaged human diversity in the cultures of the world, and the multiple layers of complexity in the individual person whose will, emotions, and consciousness, could not be reduced to statistical representations. The complexity of human nature, she and others had argued, necessitated multiple perspectives in the social sciences. To this end, Mead lobbied throughout her professional and public career for interdisciplinary approaches to the study of humanity. Skinner's scientific vision of the human 'organism' dispensed with agency and individual autonomy. And while Skinner's social theories touted the merits of a scientific meritocracy, Mead's science of culture and the self promoted social democracy.

Mead argued that a proper study of the individual entailed the belief that human nature possessed a vast wellspring of hitherto untapped potential for adaptation and transformation. The most pressing task in social administration, Mead argued, was to create environments in the home, school, and community that encouraged the individual to move beyond the conventional architecture of everyday perception and experience and discover new realms of human creativity and possibility. Whereas Skinner's early experiences with science encompassed a philosophy of precise controls in *standardizing* human behavior, one centered entirely in behavioral psychology, Mead's training in psychology and comparative anthropology pointed to a multicultural and interdisciplinary social science designed to free humanity by engaging its many new frontiers of *potentiality*.

Described in 1951 as "America's foremost woman anthropologist,"[117] Margaret Mead had established herself by the early 1930s as an authority on cultural development among both anthropologists and the lay public with her numerous studies of the native peoples of the South and West Pacific, New Guinea, and Bali. Her rise to prominence in both professional and public circles was solidified early on in her career with the publication of her famous studies, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935).[118] Both works critiqued prevailing concepts of gender and human development in anthropology during the 1920s and 30s and emphasized the powerful influence of the social environment in shaping human behavior and personality.[119] A comparative analysis of cultures, Mead argued, revealed that gender, personality, and intelligence were culturally rather than biologically determined entities. By the beginning of the Second World War Mead had also established her popular reputation as an 'expert' on culture and human nature with a series of additional studies. Along with other prominent social science 'celebrities' such as Benjamin Spock and B. F. Skinner, she capitalized on a wave of public interest in the social sciences in the 1940s and promoted her own perspectives on individual and social

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[117] "Margaret Mead," in *Current Biography: Who's New and Why*, ed. Anna Roth and Evelyn Lohr (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1951), 421-23.

[118] Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* (New York: Morrow, 1928) and Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York: Morrow, 1935).

[119] For an account of American anthropology and the heredity-environment debates see Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity-Environment Controversy 1900-1941* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978). On Franz Boas and the rise of American anthropology see George W. Stocking Jr's classic history, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1968) and his edited volume, *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

adjustment for postwar Americans.[120] Her studies of American culture gave way in the coming decades to an extensive series of popular books, articles, commentaries, and symposia that stressed the need to revise traditional concepts of family structure, gender roles, child rearing practices, and educational methods in a period of rapid social transition.

Rosalind Rosenberg has observed that an account of Mead's early training in the social sciences highlights the growing prestige of professional psychology, especially in the period immediately after the First World War. The demands of war mobilization helped shape its professional development into the most experimentally rigorous of the social sciences.[121] Although she would eventually pursue her doctorate in anthropology under Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, Mead took undergraduate and masters level degrees in psychology.

The course that galvanized Mead's interest in the social sciences in her days as a Barnard College undergraduate in the 1920s was given by one of the founders of modern sociology, William F. Ogburn (1886-1959), entitled "Psychological Factors in Culture." Along with W. I. Thomas, Albion Small, and Charles Cooley, Ogburn had been one of the central founders of American sociology, practically introducing the field to America in the early 1920s.[122] It was in Ogburn's course that Mead gained her first insights into

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[120] See, for example, the discussions of the public interest in social science in Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture and the Age of Experts, 1940-1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), and William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).

[121] Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 207-08.

[122] From the introduction to the 1966 edition of William F. Ogburn's signature classic in sociology, *Social Change: With Respect to Cultural and Original Nature* (New York: Delta, 1966, c1922). See especially the introduction by Hendrick M. Ruitenbeek.

the relationship between the life of the individual and the context of the surrounding social and cultural environment. Ogburn approached the study of human cultures temporally, as an adaptive *process* wherein social conventions, mores, and institutions were in a constant state of change and development.[123] Similar themes were explored in another of Mead's electives at Barnard -- anthropology. Again she was introduced to the field by someone who had "built the science," none other than the founder of modern anthropology, Franz Boas. Boas applied the same functionalism in Ogburn's sociology to a reworking of anthropological theory. He also brought a politically inspired liberal perspective to anthropology that he hoped would foster awareness of human rights and the value of the individual. Mead had read Boas' *Mind of Primitive Man* (1911) in her introductory psychology course. Boas argued that more could be learned about human nature through comparative cultural studies in the field than through academic debate over anthropological theories of cultural evolution.[124]

Recalling her days as a student of Boas in the early 1920s, Mead characterized his approach to the study of human nature as casting a broad net over all available

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[123] Ibid., viii. See also the comments by Donald Martindale on the contributions of Ogburn in Martindale, *The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1960), 324. Ogburn received his doctorate from Columbia in 1912 and taught sociology at Reed College between 1912 and 1917. He later took a position at the University of Chicago in 1927 and stayed on there until retirement in 1952. He was also the editor of the *Journal of the American Statistical Association* from 1920 to 1926. As Martindale notes, Ogburn was one of the modern pioneers of *social and pluralistic behaviorism*, a departure from the deterministic strains of organicism, structuralism, and relationism in theories of social evolution, one that takes a behavioral view of social phenomena. Pluralistic behaviorism had its origins with Gabriel Tarde and took its modern form under Frank H. Giddings, and later Ogburn. Its primary assumption, like that of Boasian anthropology, is that the history of social phenomena themselves, rather than biological heritage, is more important in explaining the formation of culture processes. See Gabriel Tarde, *Social Laws: An Outline of Sociology*, trans. Howard C. Warren (New York: The Macmillan Company, London, Macmillan & Co., 1899) and Frank H. Giddings, *The Scientific Study of Human Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1924).

[124] Mead, *Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years* (New York: W. Morrow, 1972), 111.

information, utilizing insights from the other social sciences in order to ascertain an image of the "whole of man."[125] Unlike speculative and theoretically based 'armchair' traditions in anthropology, Boasian anthropology stressed direct fieldwork and fact gathering.[126] Boas also refrained from adhering strongly to any one set of guiding methodologies or theories of culture. He was quick to dispel any unifying theory of culture, any standardization of data collection or theoretical structure, and indeed any notion that his was a new school of anthropology.[127] He pointed to the threat of single determinants in the analysis of human nature (in biology, economics, geography, and race) that reflected a desire for universal laws of human nature and culture.[128] Boasian anthropology aimed to reconnect human beings with their physical and social environments so that the 'individual' and the 'social' would always be considered together.[129]

In her master's work Mead had addressed the highly controversial debates of this period concerning intelligence testing. Her thesis examined the relationship between language proficiency and intelligence scores among Italian immigrants. She asserted that the testing methods were culturally biased and ethnically discriminatory.[130] Mead was an

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[125] Ibid.

[126] From the introduction by Walter Goldschmidt who edited the collection of essays by Boas entitled *The Anthropology of Franz Boas: Essays on the Centennial of His Birth*, Memoir no. 81 of the American Anthropological Association, v. 61, no. 5, pt. 2, October, 1959 (San Francisco: AAA and Howard Chandler, 1959), 1-3.

[127] Mead, *Blackberry Winter*, 31.

[128] Ibid., 90, 96.

[129] Franz Boas, "Some Problems of Methodology in the Social Sciences," in *The New Social Science*, ed. Leonard D. White (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 84-98. See page 84.

[130] See Margaret Mead, "Intelligence Tests of Italian and American Children," (Master's Thesis, Columbia University, 1924).

early dissenter from experimental reductionism and the cultural and biological determinism inherent in the psychometrics of the 1920s.

Mead elected to pursue anthropology instead of psychology or sociology. Anthropology, she recounted, "dealt with human beings in real life, rather than with the accounts of experiments which other psychologists had done within a laboratory setting."[131] Mead's work in Samoa, however, was part of a field test of conventional theories of adolescence that she later discussed in a psychological context.[132] Mead also used a host of testing techniques from psychology in her fieldwork. She used projective and cognitive tests developed by Jean Piaget and Muzafir Sherif in her work in Samoa.[133] Mead also analyzed children's drawings, and conducted maze tests to examine their cognitive ability, and she modified Rorschach tests for use in the field. Mead was in many ways a practicing psychologist as well as an anthropologist, and she published research in both disciplines.

By the early 1930s Margaret Mead and her colleague Ruth Benedict had established their reputations as groundbreaking anthropologists in the Boasian tradition of cultural analysis.[134] What Mead came to regard as 'laboratories' of primitive culture made it possible to demonstrate how different social traditions drew from the vast

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[131] Mead, *History of Psychology in Autobiography*, 295.

[132] Ibid., 317.

[133] Ibid., 312.

[134] Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1934).
Patterns of Culture, an appraisal of Native American cultures and their histories, came to be regarded as a seminal work in comparative cultural studies. In this research, *nurture* rather than *nature* became firmly established in anthropology as the primary root cause of individual and cultural character. Under this rubric, what few universal human character traits might exist were expressed and modified according to the cultural patterns that shaped them.

wellspring of human potentialities, manifesting incredible diversity in their social institutions and individual 'natures.'

Mead's book, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* (1925), was one of the first studies inspired by the Boasian functionalist school. In her analysis of Samoan village culture, Mead used the test case of adolescence to examine how the lives of young adults were patterned by culturally specific social conditions. The study brought Mead critical acclaim in the late 1920s for its challenge to Western cultural stereotypes about adolescence. Comparative analysis of Western and Samoan attitudes toward young adults clearly demonstrated that the classic *Sturm und Drang* model of adolescence was a culturally, rather than biologically, determined entity.

Young men and women in Samoa led separate lives for the most part. Group distinctions, based upon gender and age, were very uniform and closely defined by a community structure relatively unchanged for many generations. In Mead's view, the unique circumstances of Samoan tribal culture entailed much less stress for females during adolescence. In general the emotional stress, the rebellion, existential crisis, and trauma of adolescence were absent in Samoan culture. Mead argued that this was due to the overall simplicity of Samoan society that, in contrast to the West, did not present a myriad of contradictory choices about social roles, individual identities, morals, values, social philosophies, and career choices. Much of the anxiety associated with the onset of this stage in the life of young adults in the West simply did not exist in the more homogeneous environment of Samoan culture. Social roles, personalities, and identities were standardized to such a degree that individuals were not burdened with the task of

self-definition or assimilation. Mead's comparisons of character traits in Samoan men and women, and those of their Western counterparts, dramatically illustrated the influence of culture on the *patterning* of gender and personality. No longer could one model of adolescence be viewed as a component of some imagined universal human nature.

Mead reported similar revelations about the cultural construction of gender and sex-based temperament in the early 1930s while studying three different primitive cultures in New Guinea. Part of her intent in surveying the cultures of the mountain Arapesh, the river-dwelling Mundugumor, and the lake-based Tchambuli between 1931 and 1933 was to extend the analysis used in Samoa. In her book, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935), Mead disproved the conventional connection between innate temperament and gender.[135] Patterns that had been associated in the West with each sex exclusively were completely muddled by the findings in New Guinea. Mead's comparative studies found no objective scale for measuring sex differences. "[A]ny idea that temperamental traits of the order of dominance, bravery, aggressiveness, objectivity, malleability, are inalienably associated with one sex (as opposed to the other)," Mead said, "is entirely lacking."[136] Such close association between sex and temperament seemed again to be a construct of Western culture.

As Mead recalled in the introduction to her book, *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples (*1937*)*,[137] the main tenets of comparative cultural anthropology

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[135] Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York: The New American Library, 1950, c1935). See the preface to the 1950 edition for these comments.

[136] Ibid., 14.

[137] Margaret Mead, *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961 c1937).

were part of the new *culture and personality* rubric in anthropology founded by Mead and her cohort in the early 1930s. This was an attempt by Mead and other like-minded social scientists to bring all the insights and resources from psychology, sociology, psychiatry, biology, and anthropology to bear upon the study of the individual. Interdisciplinary studies of human nature were vital to the reform of professional social science. "The culture and personality approach," Mead and others asserted,

> [D]emand[ed] that these separate disciplines cease to abstract certain aspects of human life and study them without reference to the whole individual, and to the numbers of whole individuals who make up any group. It insists that there is a common meeting ground where the hypotheses of each discipline can be tested out and made relevant to a more genuine social science.[138]

Over the course of an interdisciplinary seminar held in 1934-35, Mead and her colleagues set about formulating a collaborative research strategy for the comparative study of primitive cultures. Her efforts were inspired by other interdisciplinary initiatives, especially those of Lawrence Frank, Edward Sapir, and Harry Sullivan, who were involved in integrating the new sciences of human relations in a similar fashion.[139] Mead's seminar panel compiled numerous ethnologies and utilized the diversity of disciplinary perspectives among the participants to make a comprehensive analysis of

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[138] Ibid., 2.

The "culture and personality" research rubric was explored by several groups of social scientists in the early 1930s. Many of them were sponsored by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). Mead and her colleagues were commissioned in 1934 by a subcommittee of the SSRC addressing cooperative and competitive habits (whose members included Mark May, Gardner Murphy, and Gordon Allport) to survey the extant anthropological literature and delineate the patterns of these habits among different cultures. Their data was to be combined with that from psychological and sociological studies. For this survey Mead assembled a group of her colleagues and graduate students at Columbia that included her mentors Radcliff-Brown and Ruth Benedict, as well as social scientists from other disciplines such as Erich Fromm, John Dollard, and Abraham Edel. For further details see the introduction to Mead's *Cooperation and Competition*.

[139] Ibid., 4. Mead also mentions that her participation in the Hanover Seminar of Human Relations helped her formulate the strategy for this study.

social habits for each culture in the study. The result was a new strategy for doing comparative anthropology. It yielded a basic strategy for assessing cultures, not by extrapolation from artifacts or social evolutionary theories, but by the direct examination of data concerning the process of cultural definition in time and space. Mead delineated four general areas of cultural analysis that seemed most important for comparative studies: *material environment, technology, social structure,* and *education.*[140] The conditions of the natural environment, the availability of resources, and the technologies devised to exploit them determined how people organized their lives. This partly determined the level of cooperation and competition in a culture, parameters that were highly relevant to the examination of American society.

By design Mead's models of personality and culture undermined biological and even socio-economic determinism. Mead's researches also showed that the structure of social institutions such as the family and the community played an important role in determining the parameters of individual personality, intelligence, gender identity, and character. As Mead had learned, only through the knowledge of how social roles are defined, and how individuals and groups adapt to them, does the social scientist begin to understand what kind of culture, and individual character, will result. Only by comparing anthropological findings and histories from many different cultures could patterns of culture be determined.

> ...[T]hough the nature of human personality is to some degree defined by the very fact of social participation, even before any specific human culture has been described, most of the meaning and richness of the social approach can be grasped only when attention has been given to a comparison of various primitive and advanced societies, in order to see the

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[140] Ibid., 14-15.

> personality pattern characteristic of each set of social arrangements, and, within each such generic pattern, the way in which the individual copes with the generic problems which the culture defines, the way in which he learns to make use of, adapt to, and bend to his own uses the cultural situation and the roles he is called upon to enact. This will take us into the study of ethnology as we seek an answer to the question: By what specific means can the social group shape the personality of the growing individual?[141]

The question for Americans, Mead thought, was exactly this. What was the nature of American culture? And by what means could individual character be shaped to preserve democracy? Mead's critiques of modern American culture called for a rededication to social democracy, with social science in a supporting role, as the only hope for progress in a nation where urbanization, war, and depression had seriously compromised the ideals of a free and open society.

Skinner, Mead, and America after the Second World War

American economic expansion in the decades prior to the First World War gave rise to the managerial search for order and control in a radically new and evolving urban landscape. Professional managers faced similar administrative challenges during another period of social and economic expansion after the Second World War. Historians John M. Blum and John P. Diggins, among many others, have described the profound social transformations attending the postwar decades, as well as the cultural anxieties that accompanied them. A renewed sense of nationalism and the rise of America as a world power were tempered by recent memories of the Depression. Americans, as Paul Boyer observed, wondered whether new economic, technological, and cultural forces

[141] Ibid., 772.

(symbolized in technologies like atomic energy) might emancipate or alternatively destroy civilization. The symbol of the Bomb reminded Americans that power had to be properly deployed and managed. Initially, a fear that a volatile economy might founder and plunge the nation into another Depression was widespread in 1945 and 46.[142] "A rest in today, wondrous hopes for tomorrow – but always, in the America of V-J day, there were shadows," historian Eric F. Goldman observed. "Would events follow the same patterns as the last postwar?"[143]

Attending this acute concern for economic stability in the immediate postwar years was a public resurgence of the demand for expert authority and guidance in charting the postwar cultural landscape. In her study of postwar American psychology Ellen Herman has demonstrated how the pressing need for efficient methods of social engineering during World War II brought the social sciences to the forefront of both of military and postwar social planning.[144] Experimental behaviorism, for example, had attracted attention during the war with its promise of standardizing the training and deployment of military personnel, as well as providing solutions for the many administrative and logistic aspects of war mobilization.

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[142] Among the standard analyses of this postwar phenomenon and its relation to domestic policy, consumerism, and suburban living as forms of social containment during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations are John M. Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976); John P. Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace,1941-1960* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988); J. Ronald Oakley, *God's Country: America in the Fifties* (New York: December Books, 1985); William Issel, *Social Change in the United States,1945-1983* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985); William O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence,1945-1960* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

[143] This quote comes from Goldman's 1956 introduction to his book, *The Crucial Decade: America, 1945-1955* (Westport, CT: Redwood Press, 1956), 14.

[144] Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995).

The potential of these and other researches to contribute to applied social management after the war helped shape peacetime public administration and domestic/foreign policy. James Capshew has discussed the extent to which wartime military patronage rescued psychology from the brink of professional fragmentation and dissolution at the end of the 1930s.[145] The rapid mobilization of psychology for the war effort, Capshew observed, required the interdisciplinary consolidation of various specialties enlisted for service in newly created military agencies such as the Office of Strategic Services, the Office of War Information, and the Strategic Bombing Survey.[146]

One of the principal architects of the reorganized American Psychological Association, Robert Yerkes, actively promoted the image of psychology during the war as a 'hard science' akin to engineering in its precision and utility. Yerkes, along with those like Skinner and Mead, aggressively promoted the link between wartime applications of psychological research and future projects in social administration. The bulk of experimental research in psychology shifted as well during the war from animal to human subjects as a result. The evolution of professional psychology in America both during and after the war, as Herman notes, goes far toward explaining why the behavioral orientation came again to dominate the social science disciplines as a whole by the early 1960s.[147]

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[145] James H. Capshew, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice, and Professional Identity in America, 1929-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[146] For more on these agencies see Herman and Capshew above, as well as Louis E. Hoffman's article, "American Psychologists and Wartime Research on Germany, 1941-1945," *American Psychologist* 47 (February, 1992): 264-73 and Donald A. Dewsbury, "On the Evolution of Divisions," *American Psychologist* 52 (July, 1997): 733-41.

[147] Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 142-43.

The political and economic uncertainties that spawned Truman's Fair Deal after the war, as well as the political scourge of McCarthyism during the late 1940s and early 50s, were part and parcel of a new social and political conservatism.[148] Many wondered whether or not economic momentum could continue without the war machine and comprehensive government oversight. Americans in the postwar era also faced a cultural "identity crisis" in negotiating new models of family life, community, and work. The kind of comprehensive social experimentation that Mead and Skinner hoped would follow the war did not materialize. Steven Whitfield and Richard Fried have both explained how the struggle of Americans to preserve their cultural identity was manifested in McCarthyism and fears of communist insurrection. The threat of communism, they argued, masked deep-seated cultural uncertainties within our own borders that pitted Americans against themselves.[149] Fears of cultural subversion fostered the intellectual and political scrutiny of politics, art, academia, and literature. Ideologies that smacked of moral or political liberality, or those that postulated far-reaching social

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[148] See W. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 82. Conservatives again shifted the responsibility for industrial management and social welfare into the private sector. Chafe points to the defeat in Congress of Truman's Full Employment Act of 1945 as one representative example of this new mood in postwar American politics.

[149] See Steven Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), and Chafe, *Unfinished Journey*. Truman's invocation of the Domino theory in his famous 1947 speech on aid to Turkey and Greece also highlighted American concerns over the growing consolidation of communist power in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. As the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan took shape in the late 1940s, the Truman administration fed fears of communist invasion at home with initiatives like the employee loyalty program. The criminal convictions of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs, the Russian atomic bomb, the fall of China, and the Korean conflict all but confirmed for many the suspicion that communist infiltration was afoot in the United States. New Dealism, liberalism, and forms of unconventional intellectual free inquiry, as Eric Goldman noted at the time, became associated with communist social experimentation and subversion.

experimentation, were considered suspect.[150] McCarthyism reflected the conservative desire for social containment and cultural conformity.[151]

Patterns of work, child rearing, socialization and education in the postwar era were shaped by an inherently conservative corporatism in the postwar decades. John Kenneth Galbraith observed in his famous social commentary *The Affluent Society* (1958) that postwar American culture was modeled in many respects on the military and business infrastructure that had helped win the war and make America an international power.[152] With an emphasis on production and efficiency, it was thought to be the guarantor of future economic and social integrity, a promise not unfamiliar to the management progressives of previous decades. Many looked to the authority of corporate culture for structure and guidance during a time when Americans were disconnected even further from the politics and folkways of the past. In the age of Eisenhower and consumer culture, when Americans were encouraged to "buy anything" in support of their country, the corporate conglomerate came to represent the social architecture that fundamentally redefined individual assimilation into society.[153]

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[150] For more on this cultural conservatism see Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[151] This characterization is taken from David M. Oshinsky's classic treatment of the McCarthy phenomenon in his book, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 172-74.

[152] John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958).

[153] For appraisals of the corporatization of American culture, see the contemporary analysis of the noted business journalist and critic William H. Whyte, especially his classic treatment in *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), as well as the sociologist David Riesman's study, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951). Herbert Gans' sociological appraisal of suburban life in 1950s America, however, later challenged this stereotypical image of American domestic culture, claiming that social conformism and homogeneity were not as typical of suburban culture as many had come to believe. See Gans' book, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967). For more on the history of suburban life in America, see Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

The business journalist and critic William H. Whyte and the sociologist David Riesman, for example, acknowledged the loss of individualism in corporate America and the rise of the group, and "groupthink," as models of assimilation into the new society. Conformism, according to Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956) and Riesman's famous study, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1951), permeated American social institutions. The breakdown of traditional models of family and community, Whyte observed, contributed moreover to a public fascination with social science, especially as it applied to behavioral engineering and personal adjustment. With even more vigor, Americans put their fate in the hands of social science experts who claimed to know how to navigate the postwar cultural waters.[154] In the workplace, industrial engineering and the study of human relations witnessed unprecedented expansion as Americans struggled to keep productivity high. At the level of individual and family adjustment, applied social science and psychology enjoyed a thriving advice and counseling industry in which luminaries like Benjamin Spock became celebrities.

In the chapters that follow, I will examine the public reaction to Skinner's social technology and Mead's depictions of human diversity in light of the cultural forces that shaped American consciousness in the postwar decades. In my discussion of Skinner's career as a technologist and social theorist in the 1950s I will explore his efforts to popularize a science of social engineering in the midst of a culture of containment and conformity. I will argue that what might be aptly termed Skinner's "Taylorization" of behavioral psychology, and his attempts to create technologies for popular consumption,

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[154] See William Whyte's assessment of such trends in his article, "The Social Engineers," *Fortune* 45 (1952): 88-91, 108.

garnered professional and public responses similar to those that accompanied Scientific Management in the progressive era. On a popular level, Skinnerian technologies provoked fears about the loss of individual and cultural identity in an increasingly managed and systematized postwar existence. Skinner's behavioral science was carefully scrutinized by business managers, industrial engineers, and human relations specialists, however, for its potential to increase industrial efficiency and corporate expansion.

With the introduction of his 'baby tender' technology in the late 1940s Skinner achieved a level of public notoriety that was rare among social scientists. Further examination of his efforts to promote himself as a scientific expert in the area of domestic efficiency will give special insight into how social scientists attempted to answer postwar anxieties by crafting scientific wares to fit public demand for technologies of social adjustment. By describing Skinner's explorations of contemporary social issues through the medium of utopian fiction, a better understanding of the tension between scientific aspirations in human engineering and the popular resistance to technocratic images of the self will also be explored. In his utopian novel, *Walden Two* (1946), Skinner took on such pressing postwar problems as the reorganization of American families and communities, the imposition of technocracy, and the new social roles of the sexes.

The clearest and most significant example of the popular appropriation of Skinnerian management ideology was his teaching technology in the late 1950s and early 60s. I will examine how Skinner took advantage of debates over American public education to bring his technologies and his message of social reform to an audience of educators, administrators, parents, and corporations who were receptive to the idea of accelerated learning. Skinner modified the behavioral image of the self to satisfy each of

these audiences, speaking about human potential in both mechanistic and humanistic terms. Further, the popular appropriation of Skinnerian theories of learning in the 1960s and 70s will show how images of the self were transformed to meet educational and business needs. Public audiences modified the language, techniques, and presentation of programmed learning to invoke both images of humanity.

Finally, I will use my discussion of Skinner's behavioral manifesto, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, published in 1971, to discuss how Skinner took advantage of America's heightened fears of social, economic, and ecological collapse in the late 1960s. The cultural climate of the era seemed to be a vindication of Skinner's prediction that societal ruin would be inevitable if Americans did not fundamentally reevaluate human nature and human society along the behavioral lines that he delineated. Skinner claimed that the embrace of mechanical man was the only way out of this conundrum. The intense controversy that followed the publication of *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* has not been addressed historically to any great extent. I will address this controversy in order to discover the extent to which Americans accepted or denied the mechanized self in light of the heightened awareness of war, environmental devastation, racial conflict, inflation and urban poverty in the late 1960s and early 70s.

In a period of uncertainty about American democracy in the immediate postwar period, Skinner participated in debates on the future of democracy and suggested that it was obsolete as a system of social management and control. Mead on the other hand lobbied for a social science that would preserve democracy and complement the "third force" movements in humanistic psychology during the 1950s that also sought to

undermine the behavioral orientation.[155] Like the leaders of the humanistic movement in psychology such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, Mead was interested in using personality theory to discuss the scientific basis of democracy. With this goal in mind, Mead translated her anthropological findings of the 1930s into an evolving critique of American culture, one that depicted personality and individuality in such a way as to under-gird what she saw as the best of American national character.

As I will demonstrate this critique required Mead to cast depictions of gender, family structure, and community according to conventional American standards. Although Mead's vision of the holistic self remained intact, she modified it to encourage Americans to believe that their cultural traditions were viable in the postwar world. Through a study of the reception of her book *Male and Female* (1949) in the 1950s, Mead's treatment of gender identity will be examined to illustrate how it was informed by new psychological interpretations of the concept of personality, and how Mead used these perspectives to both expand and delimit human potentiality in the sexes. While some embraced Mead's gender differentiation, others like Betty Friedan rejected it. A study of the controversy surrounding Friedan's critique of *Male and Female* will reveal some dimensions of the politics of the self in the 1950s that surrounded the appropriation of gender identities.

Mead also participated in the education controversies of the late 1950s and early 1960s and addressed the issue of child rearing and the cultivation of human potential in the experimental environments of the home and the classroom. In this instance, and not entirely unlike Skinner, Mead used the engineering language of behavior modification to promote the cultivation of human potentiality of children who lived in the international

[155] Ellen Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 264-65.

and multicultural environment of the postwar world. Finally, an analysis of Mead's own social manifesto, *Culture and Commitment* (1970), also a response to public anxieties about social collapse in the late 1960s, will be compared with Skinner's manifesto in her defense of the "personalized" individual over the mechanized self.

In the cases of Skinner and Mead, limited historical attention has been paid to the popular reception of their views concerning human nature and identity, or their status as purveyors of social technology. Still fewer have attempted substantively to engage the popular appropriation of Skinnerism and Meadism. As many historians of science have observed, science is no less a cultural activity than any other endeavor, and for the human sciences especially, historical accounts must engage social science as an expression of culture. The goal of the present study is to help close some of these gaps in the scholarship on Skinner and Mead and to use their stories to address the role of science in the popular articulation of the self in modern American society.

CHAPTER TWO

GAINING CONTROL: FROM OPERANT BEHAVIOR TO SKINNERIAN SOCIAL THEORY

The general adoption of scientific management would readily in the future double the productivity of the average man engaged in industrial work. Think of what this means to the whole country. Think of the increase, both in the necessities and luxuries of life, which becomes available for the whole country, of the possibility of shortening the hours of labor when this is desirable, and of the increased opportunities for education, culture, and recreation which this implies.

Frederick W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management (1911)*[1]

Well what would you say to the design of personalities? Would that interest you? The control of temperament? Give me the specifications, and I'll give you the man! What do you say to the control of motivation, building the interests which will make men most productive and most successful? Does that seem to you fantastic? Yet some of the techniques are available, and more can be worked out experimentally. Think of the possibilities!

T. E. Frazier, in Skinner, *Walden Two (1948)*[2]

B. F. Skinner's scientific and social philosophy had its roots in the progressive era social reform movements of the early twentieth century, especially with regard to concepts of scientific social management. The progressive response to urbanization and burgeoning mass culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries played an instrumental role in the development of professional social science. The ideals of progressive social management -- efficiency and expertise in municipal administration, urban reform and social meliorism, stewardship, and the application of science to the cause of social progress -- all were ideals that figured prominently in the evolution of behavioral psychology as an experimental science of control.

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[1] Frederick W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), 142.

[2] B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1948).

Just as behaviorism began to develop into a separate theoretical and experimental branch of psychology in the 1920s, Skinner began his career in science. His reworking of behavioral psychology in the late 1930s made the mastery of an organism's environment central to behavior modification. This perspective met with great success in behavioral psychology in the late 1940s, and Skinner went on to apply his operant behaviorism to a new model of social management. Skinner was neither a Taylorite nor a neo-progressive in the 1920s, nor was he a technocrat in the 1930s. His philosophy of social reform nevertheless reflected the social aims of management progressives and technocrats.

As discussed in the previous chapter, few historical appraisals of Skinner's life and work have succeeded in addressing his public career within the broader context of American postwar culture. Daniel Bjork's 1993 biography, *B. F. Skinner: A Life* (1993), unlike Daniel Wiener's uncritical homage *B. F. Skinner: Benign Anarchist* (1996), however, does an excellent job of portraying Skinner as an inventor of social technology firmly established in the same tradition as Franklin, Edison, and Bell, and not merely as the hero (or villain) of radical behaviorism.[3] Instead of tracing the theoretical and experimental genealogy of Skinner's behaviorism, Bjork examines Skinner as an American inventor who, from the early stages of his career, considered the political, philosophical, and economic import of his technologies and his utopian visions.

Bjork's Skinner is not a socially isolated experimentalist, but a publicly engaged and politically savvy propagandist. He was a scientist who cultivated the skill of selling science as a consumer product and who learned how to retool the presentation of his inventions to appeal to different audiences. Skinner was an active participant in

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[3] Daniel W. Bjork, *B. F. Skinner: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Daniel N. Wiener, *B. F. Skinner, Benign Anarchist* (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

American culture. The present treatment extends Bjork's depiction of Skinner as a scientist-inventor by examining Skinnerian social technology as an expression of American postwar culture. This is the same vantage point from which the historian of science, David Bakan, has discussed the history of Watsonian behaviorism in America in the early twentieth century. The symbiotic relationship between the development of behavioral science and professional social management underscores his thesis that "[b]ehaviorism must be understood as a cultural expression," and not merely as a theoretical and disciplinary development within American psychology.[4] Early American behaviorism, as Bakan notes, tried to address issues of social adjustment associated with a complex urban existence. Embedded in popular responses to behavioral thought and technology were opposing impulses -- embracing technologies of social control for their utility while also questioning their dehumanizing potential.[5]

The story of Skinner, like that of Bakan's Watson, involves the same tension between mechanistic and holistic expressions of the self. Understandably, as in Bjork's case, the confines of biography do not allow for a more extended exploration of these tensions, although Kanigel's biography of Taylor, as mentioned previously, is a notable exception. My purpose in this chapter and the next will be to situate Skinner within the history of social scientific management theory and technocracy in the United States and

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[4] David Bakan, "Behaviorism and American Urbanization," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 2 (1966): 5-28. Bakan notes that, like Skinner, Watson, because of his "personality, temperament, rhetoric, and in the many pronouncements that he made concerning the nature of human beings...represented those features in the culture which articulated with the behaviorist orientation." Skinner's rhetoric and social theories were similarly fueled by those in American postwar culture receptive to his technologies of social control. The same, incidentally, was also true of Taylor's experiences in popularizing scientific management.

[5] Ibid., 12.

assess their impact on scientific and popular interpretations of the self. I will discuss the public appropriation of Skinner's theories of social management, especially with regard to changes in education theory and administration in the late 1950s and early 60s. The present chapter, however, will address the countervailing forces in American culture that saw the rejection of Skinner's mechanized self in the 1950s, as epitomized in his Air Crib technology and his utopian vision in *Walden Two*. In the case of the Air Crib, I will go beyond Bjork's brief discussion of its connections to the postwar baby boom, one that is focused mainly on Skinner's perspective.[6] Changes in parenting and family structure launched a new 'expert' advice industry in social science, as well as new markets for domestic convenience technologies. Skinner, as Bjork observes, took full advantage of these trends.

Further, in considering American utopianism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I will examine *Walden Two* as a novel that fundamentally challenged American social conventions as well as the viability of democracy in the aftermath of World War Two. Bjork has noted Skinner's intentional use of rural imagery to invoke America's agrarian past. In his utopian novel Skinner replaced the traditional American ideals of individualism and popular democracy with visions of scientifically engineered social harmony. This substitution was roundly rejected by his humanist critics.[7] Their devotion to human dignity over the expediency of systematic technocracy, as Bjork explains, is reminiscent of earlier differences between management progressives, who

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[6] See related comments in Bjork, *Skinner*, 130.

[7] Daniel Bjork, "B. F. Skinner and the American Tradition," in *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, ed. Laurence D. Smith and William R. Woodward (London: Associated University Press, 1996), 35-55. See page 38. Also see the version of this discussion in Bjork, *Skinner: A Life*, 207-13.

stressed the need for human efficiency and organization, and their humanist "liberator" critics (such as William James, Mark Twain, Horatio Alger, and John Dewey), who resisted these potentially dehumanizing trends.[8]

While there is no doubt that these critics fed the intellectual and philosophical convictions of liberal democratic progressives in advancing the cause of social reform, I contend that the inherent tensions between the mechanized and holistic images of the self in these debates persisted in many corridors of American society. Striking the proper balance between the two images was also part of progressivism and subsequent movements in social management in the twentieth century. Americans tried to balance the ideal of individual human dignity with a desire for technological transcendence through systems of social management.

Many histories of social science that address its cultural contexts often fail to penetrate basic assumptions about "audience" and "the public." This is unfortunately still the case in what is a predominantly internalist Skinner historiography. Psychologist and historian Alexandra Rutherford's recent analysis of Skinner's public career provides a formidable and unprecedented archival survey of the many popular press portrayals and criticisms of Skinnerian behaviorism.[9] These materials, as Rutherford notes, are vital in

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[8] Bjork, "B. F. Skinner and the American Tradition," 37.

[9] See Alexandra Rutherford, "B. F. Skinner's Technology of Behavior in American Life: From Consumer Culture to Counterculture," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 39, no. 1 (2003): 1-23 and "Radical Behaviorism and Psychology's Public: B. F. Skinner in the Popular Press, 1934-1990," *History of Psychology* 3, no 4 (2000): 371-95.

In citing these articles here for the first time I must acknowledge the similarity between my historical appraisal of Skinner and that of Rutherford. Like Rutherford, I present Skinner in light of trends in twentieth-century American culture that are reflected in his career as a scientist and public intellectual. I share with Rutherford the conviction that a proper appraisal of this well-known figure in American psychology must go beyond the confines of disciplinary history and address his place in, and influence on, American culture. Comparison of our work shows that we have independently marshaled many of the same primary and secondary sources in discussing the connections between Skinner, his public audiences, and the broader social trends in American postwar culture that he attempted to address in his social theories

gaining historical insight into "how psychological knowledge is interpreted, conveyed, and received by its popular audiences."[10] Skinner is a scientist who to this day continues to be regarded as something of a "household name," (Rutherford's term) in American culture with regard to psychology. Rutherford's account of Skinner's many critics is a singularly invaluable resource in exploring the relationships between American social science and American culture.

Curiously, however, there is less sustained discussion of Skinner's audiences in relation to broad trends in American culture in Rutherford's studies than might be expected given her claims. Rutherford admits that "knee-jerk," and sensationalized reactions to Skinner's books, baby tenders, teaching machines, and social theories abound in the popular press. Yet the analysis in both of her recent articles does not thoroughly explore the cultural basis of the public mistrust of Skinnerian behavioral technology. As with Wiener and other Skinner scholars, Rutherford does not offer a convincing explanation as to why Skinner was controversial in the first place, or why he was talked about at all. Scathing critiques of the sterilizing effects of science were certainly nothing new in Skinner's time. But Rutherford's conclusion -- that Skinnerian behavioral science and social theory clashed with the "common sense" public preference for humanistic depictions of human nature -- presents no new insight into Skinner or his audiences. In

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and technologies. We often use the same terminology to describe various aspects of the history of the social sciences and of American cultural history. In one particular instance, we have both described the 1960s as the "age of Aquarius" in relation to Skinner's public career in this decade. The title for chapter three of the present dissertation is "Human Engineering in the Age of Aquarius and Beyond," and this is similar to a section title on page 12 of Rutherford's 2003 article entitled "Beyond Freedom and Dignity: Behavioral Technology in the Age of Aquarius." This similarity is entirely coincidental and is most likely explained by the general popularity of this phrase in describing the mid- to late1960s. Moreover, I am in no way claiming priority over any aspect of Alexandra Rutherford's work. The historical framework and strategy for our respective theses are fundamentally different. I have attempted at various points in the following two chapters to show where we agree and also where and how our analyses are different.

fact, it seems to contradict her initial intimation that Skinner's "audiences" were just that, multiple and with differing agendas.

Rutherford argues, as have I, that Skinnerian social theory and social technologies were imbued with the metaphors of efficiency and practicality. They also embodied, as she states, the "progressivist values" associated with the history of social melioration, as well as the embrace of technology in organizing modern life. I make similar claims in the present treatment. The analysis I offer, however, is situated within a more sustained historical discussion of the evolution of these ideals and values in American culture. My discussion of trends in scientific social management, technocracy, political theory, progressivism, Taylorism, the history of American utopianism, and postwar American culture is designed to contextualize Skinner's contributions to debates on the self in the broader context of twentieth-century American history.

Rutherford's depiction of Skinner as a public enigma, dogmatic and unwavering in his dedication to radical behaviorism, and utterly bewildered by the outcry over his views, is also, I think, problematized by Bjork's biography.[11] It is important to challenge the assumption among Skinner scholars that social critics and journalists in the popular press both reflected and shaped the whole of public opinion about Skinner and behavioral science *in toto*.[12] Without denying the general recognition among historians of science that popular media are important venues in exploring the public reception of science, it is also historically prudent to investigate the audience(s) of critics and journalists

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[10] Rutherford, "Radical Behaviorism," 372-73.

[11] Rutherford inexplicably passes over Bjork's biography by commenting simply that his is "a sympathetic yet objective portrait of one of psychology's most famous figures." See page 391of her article.

[12] Rutherford, "Radical Behaviorism," 372 and Wiener, *Benign Anarchist*, xi-xiv.

themselves in greater detail. Many who chose to write negatively about Skinner, for example, did so because of strong personal commitments to humanism and liberal democratic politics; hence their derision of Skinner. Yet the popular rejection of Skinnerian social theory does not explain, for example, the wholesale appeal of, and multimillion-dollar commitment to, technologies of teaching and the science of programmed instruction by educational and business administrators at the end of the 1950s. Nor can this explain why Skinner is still lauded as a founding father of a revolution in programmed instruction, an industry that continues to this day.

These considerations, when coupled to broader themes in American urbanization and technocracy, indicate that, while most Americans were uncomfortable with the stark and baldly mechanistic visions of the self in Skinnerian behaviorism, they were more than willing, absent the specter of Skinner, to take advantage of behavioral techniques to increase efficiency and productivity. This was especially the case in corporate and educational settings. These examples indicate the multiplicity of Skinner's audience as well as the complex and contradictory nature of his popular image, which as Rutherford concludes, although without explanation, is "uniquely intertwined" with his professed theories.[13] I will argue, however, that distinctions between the distrust of Skinnerian behaviorism on the one hand, and the widespread embrace of technocracy in America on the other, account for his multifaceted public image only when placed in the proper historical context in which humanistic and technocentric inclinations co-existed. While publicly decrying Skinner's direct challenge to human autonomy and dignity, Americans in the workplace and on the home front nevertheless employed all sorts of behavioral

[13] Ibid., 390.

methods and technologies to manage human activity. They may have done this without sustained reflection on the mechanistic implications for human nature that were embedded in technologies of social control.[14]

How then can we begin to explain the countless articles, book reviews, essays, dissertations, and book-length refutations of Skinner that support the claim that Skinner's public audiences were always at least suspicious if not completely outraged by his behavioral visions of humanity? The capacity of Skinner to inflame his many critics did not lie simply in his mechanistic depiction of the self. Like Taylorism, Skinnerism brought into focus those commitments to technocratic science and society that Americans had already made.[15] Skinner, like his audience, understood that his was in many respects a description of a world in which Americans already lived. Skinner merely advocated the refinement of social controls already extant in society, and this forced his critics and readers to confront the advent of a systematized, ordered, and controlled existence.

Some embraced Skinner's vision of the self in the hope of maximizing human potential in business, education and government and streamlining their individual and collective production. Other critics protested and condemned it. Most, however, found ways of doing both at the same time -- of holding mechanistic and holistic images of humanity together in a tentative embrace and learning to live with the fundamental tension between both visions of the self.

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[14] Ibid., 389. Rutherford's own citation of a 1959 statistic, indicating that fifty percent of surveyed Americans thought that science would advance the understanding of human behavior, might perhaps support a claim that some recognition and/or choice occurred, but she inexplicably dismisses the percentage (half the survey pool) as insignificant.

[15] Laurence Smith has noted this similarity between Skinner and Taylor, and it is my aim here to expand on his observation. See comments by Smith, in "Situating B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, 294-315, especially page 298.

In the examination here and in the next chapter, an analysis of Skinner's career as a behavioral technologist and advocate of societal engineering is presented as an exploration of modern images of human nature, contextualized as they were by both laboratory science and American culture. Such an analysis will reveal important links between scientific depictions of human nature and the dynamic of their popular appropriation in the public and private sector.

With his introduction of 'baby tender' technology in the late 1940s Skinner achieved a level of public notoriety that was rare for social scientists. An examination of his emerging status as a scientific social "expert" in the area of child rearing gives special insight into how social scientists crafted their wares to fit social needs. Further, by describing Skinner's explorations of contemporary social issues through the medium of utopian fiction, my analysis addresses the tension between scientific aspirations toward human engineering and the public resistance to mechanistic conceptions of the self. In his utopian novel, *Walden Two* (1946),[16] Skinner took on such pressing emergent social problems as the reorganization of American families and communities, the advent of technocracy, and the new social roles of the sexes. By the 1950s Skinner had developed these emergent theories on human behavior into a fully articulated philosophy of humanity and society in his 'sequel' to *Walden Two*, a formal text on the subject entitled *Science and Human Behavior* that was first published in 1953.[17] In these and other publications he used the language of human adaptive potential, evolution, and the

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[16] B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1946).

[17] B. F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1953).

'laboratory' image of experimental utopias to explain and illuminate the new environmental 'contingencies' of American postwar social transition.

Skinnerian Experiments with Social Technology

As historian Nils Wiklander has effectively argued, Skinner channeled his embrace of science as a pathway to social reform into a research program in behavioral science in the 1930s.[18] The social collapse that attended the Great Depression spurred many social scientists into organizing university-based institutes dedicated to research in social planning. As Wiklander contends, however, Skinner eschewed reform politics and collaborative research projects for the solitary mastery of behavior in the laboratory. He combined a search for the laws of behavior in animals with readings in science, philosophy, and literary criticism that sparked his imagination about how science could bring order to society.[19] As early as 1932, these investigations coalesced in an essay on behavioral interpretations of epistemology where Skinner explored the human implications of his behaviorism. In 1934 Skinner also produced a paper for a Rockefeller foundation work group (headed by Carl Murcheson and Warren Weaver) that explored the use of human verbal behavior in examining human will and emotion.[20]

While holding faculty positions at the University of Minnesota and Indiana University in the mid to late 1930s Skinner published *The Behavior of Organisms* (1938).

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[18] Nils Wicklander, "From Hamilton College to Walden Two: An Inquiry into B. F. Skinner's Early Social Philosophy," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism*, 83-108.

[19] Ibid., 86-87.

[20] Ibid., 92-93.

He also privately addressed the disturbing events in Russia and Germany in correspondence with colleagues. Social scientists at large answered the need for research into totalitarianism and fascism by creating consortiums like the American Association of Applied Psychology (AAAP) and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI). Skinner, however, stayed clear of such projects, but he did note that the scourge of Nazism indicated the need for a social scientific meritocracy. The rule of experts, he thought, would prevent such corrupt leadership and extremist nationalism.[21]

Thus, even in the experimental research phase of his career in the 1930s, there are indications that Skinner had begun to think about the social reform implications of operant behaviorism. His passing comments on political events are prescient of his full disquisition on the comparative efficacy of political systems in *Walden Two* later on. As indicated in the previous chapter, Skinner was neither a political post-progressive in the 1920s nor a scientist-activist in the 1930s. His vision of social scientific management and technocracy, however, would carry over into his next career as a public intellectual in the 1950s and 60s. The Second World War, as historian of psychology, James Capshew has argued, saw Skinner's transformation from a devotee of pure experimental research into an "inventor" and promoter of technologies of human engineering and control.[22]

Project Pigeon in the 1940s marked Skinner's professional transition. A maverick, Skinner did not involve himself in any of the collaborative and interdisciplinary wartime efforts among social scientists to marshal useful research into human behavior for the war effort. Instead he worked alone on his pigeon missile

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[21] Ibid., 96-97.

[22] James H. Capshew, "Engineering Behavior: Project Pigeon, World War II, and the Conditioning of B. F. Skinner," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism*, 128-50.

technology. During a period when professional social science expanded dramatically through military and government sponsorship, Skinner attempted to market useful techniques and technologies, battling a wartime prejudice against psychology as an inaccurate science.[23] Skinner reinvented his presentation of behavioral science later on by using the popular imagery of convenience technology and the political rhetoric of his utopian writing in appealing to a broader audience in the postwar and Cold War eras. Skinner became a social analyst and critic in order to sell the virtues of operant behaviorism to a nation facing new challenges.

Skinner's status as a purveyor of behavioral technology during the war, embodied first in his work for the American military on experimental missile guidance systems, and later in the technology of child rearing devices, are reflections of Skinner's aspirations toward a science of comprehensive social engineering.[24] The Second World War provided Skinner with some initial opportunities to try his hand at marketing social technologies to a broader public audience.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 Skinner began to explore applications of behavioral science to the war effort, specifically the production of warfare technology. The unusual technique of using kamikaze pilots in flying weapons had proven effective in the Pacific theatre and in Europe. Another particularly unorthodox ordinance delivery method involved the behavioral conditioning of dogs by the Russian army to serve as walking mines, engineered to crawl under enemy tanks and debilitate them with

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[23] Ibid., 128-30.

[24] Capshew's argument appears to counter claims by Nils Wiklander (in the same volume) that Skinner's ideas about social engineering began well before the war. I am inclined toward Wiklander's claim that Skinner began to explore the social implications of his work, at least intellectually, before the war, but that Project Pigeon was key in helping him begin to imagine future technologies of social reform.

explosive charges.[25] Skinner became interested in producing similar technologies to help the American military gain an advantage over the Germans in designing missile guidance systems.

While observing the acrobatic movements of pigeons one afternoon from his back yard window in Minneapolis, Skinner hit upon an idea. "Suddenly I saw them as 'devices' with excellent vision and extraordinary maneuverability. Could they not guide a missile?," Skinner wondered.[26] With the help of two graduate students, Skinner went to work on designing a mechanism for guiding air-to-ground missiles using pigeons mounted in the nose cone of a warhead. Skinner produced a device that utilized three pigeons rigorously conditioned to peck at plates showing the projected images of the target and correct for directional changes when the image moved from one part of the plate to another. With behavioral modification Skinner produced pigeons that could peck with accuracy and consistency under a wide range of adverse environmental conditions inside a missile cone.

Skinner confidently approached several military and industrial organizations in order to solicit financial support for the development of what he himself regarded as an important military secret. Through his connections at the University of Minnesota, Skinner first approached the National Defense Research Committee in 1941 but failed to get funding.[27] He had better luck convincing a private commercial company, the General

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[25] B. F. Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist: Part Two of an Autobiography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 255.

[26] Ibid., 241.

[27] At one point, Skinner considered forcing the project on the NDRC by taking the invention public in a major magazine such as *Life* or *The Saturday Evening Post*, but later thought better of it, given what he

Mills Corporation, that such gadgeteering was possible using behavioral methods. Putting the weight of corporate endorsement behind Skinner's research, General Mills convinced the newly formed Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) to support a contract to develop a technology that government engineers thought was feasible. Eventually a total of $75,000 was funneled into what became knows as 'Project Pigeon.'[28] Despite a successful demonstration of the guidance system, the project was dropped by the OSRD in April 1943.

Skinner blamed the demise of the project on what he concluded was a general lack of faith among OSRD committee members and other project scientists in the reliability and accuracy of behaviorally modified pigeons. They clearly had not bought into Skinner's mechanistic concepts whereby organisms could be behaviorally designed into accurate machine devices, and this proved instructive to Skinner in subsequent attempts to showcase his technologies. James Capshew has argued that Skinner's fortunes reflect those of the discipline in general in failing to convince government officials and engineers that psychology could produce reliable technological applications.[29]

Despite the OSRD committee's skepticism of pigeon technology, Project Pigeon served to open up new and exciting possibilities for Skinner in behavioral research. His work with pigeons had suggested that complex behaviors could be brought under precise

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believed to be its military importance. See his discussion of the negotiations in Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 255-56.

[28] I take my cues for this part of the narrative from James H. Capshew's informative essay, "Engineering Behavior: Project Pigeon, World War II, and the Conditioning of B. F. Skinner," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, 128-50.

[29] Capshew, "Engineering Behavior," 128-30.

control. The research had also illustrated the inverse -- that the construction of highly complex behaviors was possible.[30] With improvements in behavioral technique during these experiments the behavioral modifications had also been done at an accelerated pace, far beyond what had been accomplished previously with rats.[31] The pigeons in the missile project had been conditioned to function in environments that were entirely different from their 'natural' environment. They could, as Skinner predicted, be built into 'devices.' Project Pigeon provided inspiration for Skinner's subsequent experiments with the behavioral technologies of child rearing. The device metaphor for the pigeon had been no accident. In the late 1940s Skinner actively promoted the scientific links between human and animal behavior in the public eye, alluding with each new marvel of experimental conditioning to the possibilities for social engineering.

By 1950 the word out of the Harvard Psychological Laboratories was that Skinner was using animal experiments to explore human nature. In a set of articles that appeared in *Time* and *Popular Science* about Skinner, this juxtaposition was developed more fully.[32] The articles stressed the value of pigeons as ideal subjects for the exploration of human characteristics, noting in particular the similarity of reaction times, color vision, and penchant for superstitious behavior. An article for *Time* in 1950 described

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[30] Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 267.

[31] Ibid., 268. This acceleration had more to do with improved experimental technique rather than differences in rat and pigeon intelligence. Skinner believed that intelligence was ultimately reducible to behavioral contingencies. Skinner and his assistants had taught pigeons to perform very complex activities such as playing notes on a piano in sequence and playing ping-pong, the latter being an object of public fascination. Skinner claimed to have achieved this behavior in a matter of minutes, quickly re-enforcing the pigeons so that they would continuously peck at the ball and bounce it back and forth. All this, Skinner exclaimed, was done "by hand" and without mechanical devices. "I remember the day as one of great illumination," Skinner later recalled.

[32] "Harvard Trains Pigeons to Work for a Living," *Popular Science* 157 (July, 1950): 116-18; "Pigeons and People," *Time* 55 (June 19, 1950): 72-73.

experiments with pigeons conditioned to play ping-pong matches to their mutual benefit, i.e., the procurement of food. The implication of the experiment was that similar techniques for engineering such key character traits as cooperation might also work for solving human problems. 'Cooperation' and 'competition,' as discussed in an article for *Science News Letter*, were merely matters, Skinner argued, of molding behavioral contingencies to any given setting. Any 'pigeon,' Skinner claimed, could be taught complicated behaviors, whether wild or domesticated.[33] Perhaps such factors as cultural background, level of education, and intelligence might also be transcended in the case of humans. Skinner would later assert as much in his work on education.

Similar messages were embedded in the marketing campaign for what was perhaps Skinner's most famous novelty, the baby tender. Skinner first thought of creating a device to simplify the care of infants after observing the intense anxiety his wife Yvonne endured with their first child in the late 1930s.[34] Like many women of her generation, as Dan Bjork observes, she had little familiarity with child rearing responsibilities. When their second child Deborah was born in 1944, Skinner became determined to design an enclosed environment for her that would simplify parental rearing duties and provide a safe and unrestrictive, healthy environment for the child. Skinner constructed a crib-size box that was temperature-controlled, with a glass front panel. Freeing the infant from restrictive clothing and linens, Skinner installed a canvass floor that could be rolled through the crib, replacing soiled sections as needed. The box, Skinner argued, met the needs of busy mothers and active infants.

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[33] "Pigeons Play Ping-Pong," *Science News Letter* 57 (June 17, 1950): 371-72.

[34] Bjork, *Skinner*, 130-31.

Skinner's goal in designing the tender was to simplify the basic maintenance activities in infant care for mothers who were under increasing pressure to both manage the domestic environment and move out into the job market. In addition, his critique of child rearing techniques, and of child psychology in general, centered on the observation that modern methods lacked any scientific scrutiny. Skinner translated the language of operant conditioning into that of 'reinforcement,' the same terminology used by the child psychologist Benjamin Spock. By gaining control of baby's environment, Skinner attempted to introduce scientific management into this particular aspect of daily life. The tender would shorten the time spent on child rearing duties and enhance the mental and physical health of children using an unrestrictive environment.[35] Unlike other psychologists, Skinner, the radical behaviorist and reductionist, claimed that an infant's mood, temperament, and general emotional development depended primarily on its physical comfort. For Skinner's potential audience this perspective reduced the alleged psychological complexities of child development to straightforward practical considerations. From a commercial and consumer standpoint, this was undoubtedly also meant to enhance the Air Crib's image as a technology of convenience designed to replace obsolete and inefficient parenting practices. In a fast-paced modern world, Skinner would argue, the tender provided children with more of the essential comfort and mobility they needed for emotional and mental health. This, in turn, increased their

[35] B. F. Skinner, "Baby in a Box," in *Readings in Developmental Psychology*, ed. Judith K. Gardner (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1978).

opportunities to explore the kind of 'creative' behaviors that would later be necessary in contending with future environmental/social adaptation.[36]

As with pigeons and missiles, close control of an infant's immediate environmental contingencies was the key innovation of the baby tender. By symbolically relegating the psychological complexities of child development to the realm of a simple, controlled space, Skinner felt that he could offer the parents of the baby boom generation an alternative to the advice 'industry' in childcare.[37] By emphasizing the tender's appliance-like qualities, Skinner attempted to appeal to a growing consumer market that had embraced the mantra of 'better living through science.' Much like the contemporary spectacle of Walt Disney's "Tomorrowland," with its futuristic emphasis on modernity

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[36] It is interesting to note here that Skinner may have emphasized these advantages of the baby tender in light of other relatively well-known studies that correlated restrictive swaddling techniques with subsequent patterns in destructive temperament. One of the most famous of these studies was conducted by Ruth Benedict, a close colleague of Margaret Mead, who researched the parenting strategies in Russian culture as part of the culture/personality and national character rubric in anthropology during the 1930s. See her study, "Child Rearing in Certain European Countries," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 19, no. 2 (April, 1949): 342-50.

[37] The Cold War affected many aspects of the postwar American experience, including the rearing of children. Parents relied on the authority of experts in medicine and psychology for guidance in childcare. Beginning in the war years anxious parents were inundated with books, magazines, pamphlets, and texts designed to help them succeed on the home front and help keep the nation strong. Much of this literature stressed the need for tight controls on the immediate physical and social environment of babies. Good interpersonal relationships, now the primary goal of the nuclear family, and proper hygiene were vital to the normal development of children. Any deviation, it was suggested, could result in the social, emotional, or intellectual maladjustment of children. Examples of this literature abound. For an example of contemporary manuals emphasizing control of the environment, see Gertrude E. Chittenden, *Living With Children* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1945). Many of these guides addressed the everyday aspects of caring for babies and children. Perhaps the most popular and influential of these was Dr. Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Sloan, and Pearce, 1946) which encouraged parents to feel confident and trust their own instincts. Other examples of practical manuals include Helen F. Dunbar, M. D., *Your Child's Mind and Body: A Practical Guide for Parents* (New York: Random House, 1949) and Dorothy E. Bradbury, *Learning to Care for Children* (New York: D. Appleton Century Co., 1946). Organizations such as the Child Study Association of America also produced books and pamphlets for new parents. See their publication *Parents Questions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947). Other texts explored the sociological and developmental consequences of child rearing, examining developmental stages and the problems of social adjustment. For examples see Arnold Gesell, *Child Development: An Introduction to the Study of Human Growth* (New York: Harper, 1949); Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1950); Henry H. Goddard, *Our Children in the Atomic Age* (Mellot, IN: Hopkins Syndicate, 1948).

and convenience technology, Skinner promoted the baby tender as yet another labor-saving device.[38]

> The Aircrib has many advantages for both child and parents. For the child it offers greater comfort, safety, freedom of movement, and an opportunity for the earliest possible development of motor and perceptual skill. For the parent it saves labor and gives a sense of security about the baby's well being.[39]

Beyond its convenience the tender would rid parenting of inefficient and damaging practices and provide control over the first years of a baby's life, years that 'experts' like Dr. Benjamin Spock[40] had convinced Americans were crucial to the emotional development of children. Skinner's device would place the power of technology directly in the hands of average citizens instead of pediatricians and 'experts.'

For new parents who had been told that the first years of life were the most formative, the baby tender ostensibly provided a practical solution to seemingly complex problems. The controlled environment of the tender cultivated desirable traits,

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[38] See also Alexandra Rutherford's very informative discussion of these trends in consumer culture in "B. F. Skinner's Technology of Behavior in American life," 2-6.

[39] See Skinner, "Baby in a Box," 101.

The popular iconography of the postwar era and its emphasis on futurism fueled a new consumerism that embraced science and technology as the key to modern living. Advertisers and the media fed the American desire for convenience and for ergonomic, efficient design in cars, home designs, appliances, and other household items. A future-minded public was also treated to the spectacle of technological transcendence in such displays as Walt Disney's 'future world' exhibits that featured a look at modern urban and suburban life in the next century. Skinner hoped that such technologies as the baby tender would also be embraced in this new culture of convenience. For more on the iconography and consumer culture of the 1950s consult Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1986). For discussions of how the new medium of television promoted consumer culture see Karal A. Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[40] Spock's book, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan, Pearce, 1946), was wildly popular in the 1940s and 50s as a guidepost for new parents. Dr. Spock became something of a public expert and celebrity as a result, and he was highly regarded throughout the postwar decades as a founder of modern parenting theory. See the recent biography on Spock by Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), and Spock's own account of his celebrity and influence in Benjamin Spock & Mary Morgan, *Spock on Spock: A Memoir of Growing Up With the Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).

empowering parents with the ability to introduce behavioral contingencies that ensured well balanced, calm, tolerant, and creative children. Indeed, Skinner saw the tender as the perfect laboratory for "building happy and healthy babies," and discovering the optimal conditions for molding character and personality.[41]

> If, as many people have claimed, the first year is extraordinarily important in the determination of character and personality, then by all means let us control the conditions of that year as far as possible in order to discover the important variables.[42]

Not unexpectedly, Skinner's methods left many in the public uneasy. The tender was met with mixed reviews. After convincing the editors of *Ladies Home Journal* to publish an article on Skinner's own success in using the baby tender for his daughter, he received a flurry of inquiries from interested parents.[43] There were also reports in several mainstream magazines such as *Time* and the *New Yorker* that carried favorable reviews of the tender. Touted by one reporter as a device "counted on to revolutionize the rearing of children and enormously diminish parental strain," Skinner could boast that forty families had used the Box with great success.[44] *Time* ran a 1954 article about twin boys, Roy and Ray Hope, who were raised in a Skinner Box for their first eighteen months. The endorsement from the mother seemed to leave no doubt about its basic practicality --

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[41] Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 290.

[42] Ibid.

[43] B. F. Skinner, "Baby in a Box," *Ladies Home Journal* (October, 1945): 30-31, 135-36, 138. In the years following its introduction other magazines provided accounts of its successful use. See "Baby Box," *New Yorker* (July 19, 1947): 19-20; "Box Reared Babies," *Time* 63 (February 22, 1954): 66.

[44] "Baby Box," *New Yorker* (July 19, 1947): 19-20.

"Mrs. Hope's verdict: the box is a boon to mothers because it cuts down on laundry and bathing."[45]

But the tender also inspired debate and occasionally harsh criticism of parental techniques that reduced babies to lab rats. Although Skinner received many letters from interested parents, he also got letters from physicians cautioning him not to market the device without further testing. Professional endorsements from psychiatrists and physicians were few and cautious.[46] Other letter writers were firmly opposed to the tender, seeing it as a cage that would be used by neglectful parents. One respondent singled out Skinner, the amoral academic scientist who subjected his own child to experimental analysis, for some particularly vitriolic remarks.

> This professor who thinks he can rear his little child by depriving her of social life, sun and fresh air [*sic*]. Can't you people of the law do something about this? These crack-pot scientists...[c]aging this baby up like an animal just to relieve the mother of a little more work [*sic*].[47]

Those few commercial and governmental agencies that expressed interest in manufacturing the tender were concerned about its negative image as a sterile and isolating environment.[48] Commercial patrons associated the baby tender with the cold instrumentation of the laboratory.[49]

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[45] "Box-Reared Babies," *Time* 84, no. 1 (February 22, 1964): 66.

[46] Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 305-06.

[47] Ibid., 305.

[48] Skinner, "Baby in a Box," 103; Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 291.

[49] See the detailed appraisal of the Air Crib's commercial history by Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr., and Elizabeth Nielsen-Gammon, "B. F. Skinner and Psychotechnology: The Case of the Heir Conditioner," *Review of General Psychology* 3, no. 3 (1999): 155-67. Benjamin and Nielsen-Gammon note three surveys that were conducted by Skinner and the manufacturers of the Aircrib in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The surveys indicated that the majority of those who actually used the Crib were very satisfied with it. Benjamin and Nielsen-Gammon disagree, as do I, with Daniel Bjork in and his contention that the commercial failure of the Air Crib was due to limited research. A more likely explanation, they claim, is that the Crib was seen

In the emerging suburban landscape of the postwar period, the subject of parenting was associated with anxiety and controversy about how best to raise children and prepare them for adulthood. The ambiguous role of science in mediating these concerns is clearly represented in the mixed reception of the Baby Box. Although many nominally welcomed the role that science might play in family planning, others resisted the intrusion of scientific 'expertise' into parenting. The laboratory and the experimental aesthetic of the Box did little to accentuate its intended function as a benign tool of convenience and efficiency. Despite Skinner's assurances to the contrary, many critics worried that the tender would stunt emotional development.[50] While the tender was meant to fit the new consumer ideal of individual fulfillment and family harmony through domestic technology, a labor saving device for parenting apparently stretched the proper limit of science in the eyes of most Americans.[51] The experimental connotation of the "box" in the title of the *Ladies Home Journal* article, Skinner later recalled, had been a mistake and was partly to blame for the misrepresentation of the tender.

With the bomb guidance project Skinner had trouble convincing his military patrons that his behavioral techniques could be used in producing precise organic

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by most as a dehumanizing technology of "displacement" that undermined the normal relationship between parents and children. I agree with this assessment, but it is clear that Benjamin and Nielsen-Gammon are highly biased in their supportive portrayal of Skinnerian technology. They make clear their belief that the Air Crib is still today a viable technology, and that Skinner was the victim of an "appallingly bad" public understanding of science. I would also disagree with those historians such as Alexandra Rutherford, who claim a positive reception for the Air Crib in the 1950s and 60s. Skinner's tender was indeed marketed to fit consumer desire for convenience technology, but it was nevertheless a commercial failure. Despite Rutherford's claim, Skinner did not understand American culture as well as he thought he did in the early 1950s. See Rutherford's comments in "B. F. Skinner's Technology of Behavior," 4, 6.

[50] Rutherford associates this attitude about the tender with the rise of psychoanalytic child psychology and changing social roles for women in the 1950s. See Rutherford, "B. F. Skinner's Technology of Behavior," 6-7.

[51] Skinner, "Baby in a Box," 101.

"devices" such as pigeons. The social import of his child rearing technologies was lost as well on many who associated the technology of the Baby Box with the abuses of social science reminiscent of Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). The trouble lay in convincing consumers that the tender employed benign and non-aversive methods that did not isolate children from the outside world. It was not meant as a substitute for parenting.

For Skinner, the tender was simply an extension of the parenting techniques that he and his wife Yvonne had used on their own children. Ironically, as psychologist Elizabeth Jordan has argued, the Skinners took a remarkably permissive attitude toward discipline and control of the environment, one for which Benjamin Spock would have approved.[52] Indeed, a popular focus on permissiveness, on allowing children the freedom to explore their world without restrictions or harsh punishment, overshadowed Spock's equally strong emphasis on parental authority and leadership. Spock encouraged parents to present children with the illusion of freedom by allowing them some independence. Bad behavior was re-directed through positive reinforcement. Spock's strategy, Jordan argues, actually paralleled Skinner's behavioral philosophy of parenting. By passively controlling the child's environment, the Skinners could create the illusion of freedom for their children and help them learn creativity and independence while still retaining parental authority. The Skinners did not believe in harsh punishment. They claimed to use reasoned explanations and positive reinforcement, much as Spock had recommended.

Anxiety over totalitarian science and dehumanization was also associated with Skinner's utopian musings. His novel *Walden Two*, first published in 1946, was received poorly by a public whose fear of communism, economic instability, threat of war, and

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[52] Elizabeth A. Jordan, "Freedom and the Control of Children: The Skinners' Approach to Parenting," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism*, 199-214. See pages 207-11.

social change left little room for scientifically inspired social experimentation on a grand scale. Yet, as I will show in the next chapter, a rise in popularity of *Walden Two* in subsequent decades would see Skinner's public image modified by a new readership whose collective memory of the Depression and world war figured less in their vision of future America. With what one reviewer termed his 'society tender' Skinner would again attempt to transform the experimental language of operant behaviorism into the rhetoric of social reform, addressing the question of human freedom while at the same time invoking classic individualism and America's agrarian past.[53] As with baby tenders, the illusion of freedom could be applied to individuals in a small community where their full creative potential could be realized through passive environmental controls. Skinner addressed the persistent dilemma of how to accommodate the individual in a predominantly bureaucratic society. Freedom in all human settings was an illusion, he thought, but one that could be utilized scientifically to help rebuild a decaying metropolis. As Skinner's protagonist T. E. Frazier would argue in *Walden Two*, human behavior was already under systematic controls. The controls needed refinement so as to liberate human potential.

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[53] "Box Reared Babies: Skinner Baby Box," a review of *Walden Two*, by B. F. Skinner, *Time* 63 (February 22, 1954): 66.

Utopian Dreams: Experiments in Social Engineering

ADAMS AND EVES, NINETEEN FIFTY -- ?

They stood upon the eerie, rubbled waste
Left by the atom-bombs – a stunned, hurt youth
And girl, half-blind, and in their mouths the taste
Of ashes from the scattered corpse of truth,
The days dragged. They were joined by other pairs
Merged in the primitive, grim fight for life,
Wrenched from grey aftermaths of hate and strife.

At first they stumbled on with dark, strained breath,
But gradually they were touched by dawn.
The complicated avarice, senseless death,
Sly, vicious oratory – all were gone.
Now stripped and timid, they could once more plan
A small but actual brotherhood of man.

Maxwell Bodenheim[54]

On the heels of his experimental successes with behavioral technology in the mid-1940s Skinner began thinking about opportunities for social experimentation that the war's end might provide. Americans might be open to social experimentation, he thought, after a period of social mobilization that had radically altered public and private life. Having been instilled with the "crusading" spirit of the war effort, America's return to traditional patterns of life, work, and family seemed unlikely to Skinner.[55] Skinner recalled a dinner conversation with friends in Minnesota in the spring of 1945 where the subject of returning sons and daughters came up. In such an atmosphere, Skinner wondered aloud, why not continue with social experimentation? "[T]hey should

[54] A signed and unpublished poem sold to B. F. Skinner by Maxwell Bodenheim dated 1947. Papers of B. F. Skinner, Reactions to Skinner's Work, ca. 1948-1976. Box 1, 1948-1951. [HUGFP 60.15]. Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA. Items from these folders are hereafter referred to as HUGFP 60.15. A note written by Skinner at the bottom of the page reads, "Eve and I bought this from Bodenheim in Greenwich Village. He was bleary -, bloodshot-eyed ...".

[55] Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 292.

experiment," he asserted, "they should explore new ways of living, as people had done in the communities of the nineteenth century."[56]

Given the collapse of the economy in the early 1930s and the social and philosophical morass that it had produced, it seemed to Skinner that a return to traditional living patterns made little sense. The Second World War, more than any other event in American history, Skinner believed, held the potential for creating viable alternatives to a conventional lifestyle. Shortly after this conversation Skinner began writing an exposition that would become the utopian classic, *Walden Two*, a novel that he started in June 1945 and finished in just under 14 weeks. The 'poetic license' of this novel allowed him to explore the implications of operant behaviorism for human engineering to the fullest extent without the constraints of a professional forum.[57]

As historian Ellen Herman has observed, the institutional expansion of social science during the war created a postwar enthusiasm for producing techniques and technologies that had practical application to social management.[58] Fresh from the war experience, and the lessons of Project Pigeon, Skinner came to believe that behaviorism writ large rendered traditional theories of political economy obsolete. Short of wholesale revolution, he surmised, social reform could be achieved through the improvement of the individual's developmental environment. By improving family and educational

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[56] Ibid.

[57] B. F. Skinner, "Walden Two Revisited," preface from the 1976 edition of *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1948).

[58] Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts, 1940-1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). See especially the relevant chapters, "The Career of Cold War Psychology," 124-52 and "The Growth Industry," 238-75.

environments for children, a new generation of Americans could eventually perfect society.

Both Skinner and Margaret Mead channeled their respective technocratic and meliorative reform agendas in the 1950s into critiques of the family and the school. Skinner used behavioral psychology to develop technologies of social adjustment and reform. He also concluded, as I will demonstrate, that democracy as a system of social management was flawed. A reading of *Walden Two* clearly indicates, in fact, that Skinner was well versed in postwar debates among political scientists on the utility of democracy as a system of governance.

As psychologist and disciplinary historian Jill Morawski has observed, Skinner's forays into utopian writing about the role of experimental psychology in the cause of social reform was part of a tradition in utopian thought among his immediate predecessors in psychology.[59] Other prominent psychologists like G. Stanley Hall, Hugo Münsterberg, William McDougall, and John B. Watson had written similar utopian essays about scientifically inspired societies in the 1910s and 20s. Each of them reflected a desire among psychologists to have professional psychology play a role in creating systems of social management that would be run by highly trained scientific "specialists."

For progressive era psychologists, professional success mandated that they participate in introducing scientific efficiency to social administration. Such aspirations were in turn bolstered by what Morawski describes as a general public fascination in the 1920s and 30s with mental testing, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and the promise of

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[59] Jill G. Morawski, "Assessing Psychology's Moral Heritage Through Our Neglected Utopias," *American Psychologist* 37 (1982): 1082-93.

better living through science.[60] Psychologists would "provide expert leadership and implement scientific measures of social control."[61] Experimental psychologists were just as keen as clinicians in the first half of the twentieth century to make psychology socially relevant.

Viewing psychologists' utopian writings as expressions of a desire for social relevance obviates less charitable views among historians of psychology such as John Mills. Mills has masterfully chronicled the theoretical evolution of behavioral psychology from its beginnings in nineteenth-century New Realism and pragmatic positivism.[62] Mills' unhistorical and dismissive appraisal of Skinner, as a failed philosopher and polemicist incapable of addressing the disparity between his social philosophy and its basis in animal experimentation, however, adds little to our understanding of *Walden Two*'s significance as a cultural artifact. Mills believes that the logical and metaphysical inconsistencies in Skinner's philosophy of mind (or, rather, 'no mind'), and his penchant for avoiding the criticism of his contemporaries, renders *Walden Two* an exercise in wishful thinking that is unsubstantiated by authentic behavioral science. From a cultural historical perspective, however, I contend that such inconsistencies are beside the point. In the present discussion I am interested in the social and political dimensions of *Walden Two* as a critique of modern society, a utopian polemic with a history that goes beyond its author's status as a behaviorist. As Morawski states, "utopias comprise entertaining pronouncements on psychology's ultimate

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[60] Ibid., 1091.

[61] Ibid., 1092.

[62] John Mills, "The Behaviorist as Philosopher: B. F. Skinner," in *Control: A History of Behavioral Psychology* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 123-51. For comments on the origins of behaviorism, see Mills' first chapter, "The Birth of Psychological Behaviorism," 23-54.

contribution to a better society and the techniques that should be implemented by psychological experts."[63] Indeed, they served as vehicles through which psychologists could articulate the relevance of science to social reality, advocating as they often did the consolidation of disparate branches of professional psychology in response to social crises.[64]

Skinner of course faced a similar set of circumstances in the postwar atmosphere of the 1940s. The social transformations entailed in world war and the Cold War presented Skinner with what he and other scientists and intellectuals believed was the best opportunity yet to propose plans for social adjustment. Unlike his predecessors, however, Skinner created real-world technologies that he believed would make the manipulation of social environments possible. For him, utopian communities could be actual experiments in social engineering, just as they had been for other groups of Americans in the nineteenth century who faced similar challenges of adjustment and adaptation in the face of urban expansion and industrialization.

Skinner's utopian vision was inspired by Henry David Thoreau's original nineteenth-century autobiographical recollection, *Walden* (1854).[65] As a young man Skinner, like Thoreau, became enchanted with Walden Pond, and he immersed himself in *Walden* and the collected works and notes of Thoreau.[66] Skinner seemed particularly attracted to what he saw in the novel as a life made efficient through a simplified

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[63] Morawski, "Assessing Psychology's Moral Heritage," 1092.

[64] Ibid., 1083.

[65] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or, Life in the Woods* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002, c1854).

[66] Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 296-97.

environment. Skinner was also impressed with Thoreau's dedication to self-reinvention and divergence from a traditional lifestyle, and his almost scientific approach to a new design for living through cloistered self-examination.[67]

In his own novel Skinner envisioned a rural commune where members of a small collective would work, raise families, and organize living spaces around the principles of experimental behaviorism. The task of the Walden Two project would be to create an environment that would sustain a high degree of social integration while also providing for the essential physical and emotional needs of the individual through the use of social technology. One of the ultimate goals of this experimental environment would be selectively to engineer out all 'undesirable' (i. e., inefficient or cumbersome) character traits by modifying environmental contingencies in the community setting. Such alterations were left to 'planners' who were trained in behavioral science and technology.

Skinner was well aware that *Walden Two* fell into an established genre of utopian literature and social thought stemming back to Plato's *Republic*. Undoubtedly, he would have put himself in the company of Francis Bacon and Edward Bellamy as one of the great utopian thinkers.[68] Like these philosophers, Skinner wrestled with the question of

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[67] David Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). See especially Shi's chapter on the transcendentalists, "Transcendental Simplicity," 125-153 for a description of Thoreau's life on Walden Pond.

[68] The philosopher and reformer Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is best known for his views on empirical methods in science and science's utility. One of the most well known utopian writers, Bacon envisioned a utopian community in his novel, *New Atlantis* (1627). See Sir Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis and the Great Instauration*, trans. Jerry Weinberger (Arlington Heights, IL: H. Davidson, 1989). Bacon envisioned a community of natural philosophers living together in the monastic setting of Salomon's house and practicing the study of nature as a form of religious devotion. As an exploration of socialism and a tract on social reform and industrial reorganization, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (New York: The Modern Library, 1951, c1887), was one of the most widely read and popular novels of its time. Enthusiasm for his social reforms was intense, and something of a political party was formed around discussion of his book. Over a hundred Nationalist Clubs were formed in the 1890s to discuss his ideas, and a reform party called the Peoples' Party was formed in 1891 and became a central part of the Nationalist movement. For more on the social and literary impact of Bellamy's novel, see the collected

how to organize society such that the greater good of the community was better served. His hypothetical system of government was not unlike Plato's meritocracy in which a class of educated leaders, specially selected for a life of statesmanship, was trained to manage society. Bacon had proposed a similar strategy in his utopian classic, *New Atlantis* (1627).

Exploring the societal problems generated by industrialization and urbanization put Skinner in good company with nineteenth-century utopian theorists such as Edward Bellamy and Herbert Morris, both of whom addressed the rise of mass society and the concomitant disjuncture of individuals from nature and a sense of community. Thoreau looked to nature to recapture a sense of community and personal identity. Others such as Bellamy addressed the destructive forces of industrial expansion and mechanization, arguing that they needed to be reshaped to serve the interests of humanity rather than machines.[69] Following their lead, Skinner sought to combine the best of both

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essays in *Looking Backward, 1988-1888*, ed. Daphne Patai (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988). For an appraisal of Bellamy's influence on the reform movement in the 1890s see Robert Shor, "The Ideological Matrix of Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century America: Reading Bellamy's *Looking Backward*," 3-26 in Francis Robert Shor, *Utopianism and Radicalism in a Reforming America, 1888-1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997).

[69] Edward Bellamy's utopian social theories were representative of the late nineteenth-century secular utopian writers who dealt primarily with theories of economic and social planning. The utopians of this period strove to understand and improve on emerging institutions of mass management. Some chose to retreat from these new trends, but progressives like Bellamy embraced them. The central problem for progressive utopians lay in how to design social institutions so as not to compromise cultural traditions and individual autonomy entirely. Dystopian writing of this period addressed the loss of these traditions in an industrialized urban society.

Bellamy proposed to subject humanity to the rigors of industrial efficiency and military organization where the individual worker served the greater whole. This would result, Bellamy believed, in social and moral edification. For a survey of Bellamy's theories and those of other nineteenth-century utopian writers, see *The Quest for Utopia: An Anthology of Imaginary Societies*, ed. Glenn R. Negley and J. Max Patrick (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952).

philosophies in the social technology of operant behaviorism. What earlier social experiments had lacked, he claimed, was a sound scientific basis.[70]

Most of the story of *Walden Two* takes the form of a Socratic dialogue between the community's creator, psychologist T. E. Frazier, and a group of guests from a nearby urban university. Two of the guests are professors of psychology and philosophy respectively, and these characters serve as critical foils in the articulation of Skinnerian social theory, delineated through the character of Frazier. Professor Castle, a humanist philosopher, remains vehemently opposed throughout the visit to what he considers Frazier's affront to human dignity. Professor Burris (similar to 'Burrhus,' Skinner's own first name), an academic psychologist, is eventually won over by Frazier's arguments. Also accompanying the academicians are two college-age couples fresh from the war. They mull over the debate about the merits and drawbacks of the Walden Two community. By the end of the novel, one couple is convinced enough to move into the colony, but the other pair returns to urban life. For Burris, the potential of such experimental communities culminates at the end of *Walden Two* in his own epiphany and conversion (similar, no doubt, to Skinner's own).

> I felt a warm blood coursing through my veins. This was what I had really wanted. I was on my own at last, and ahead of me lay a future of my own making. ...I pulled out the copy of *Walden* and turned to the last page...Its apparent mysticism and its obscurity were unlike the rest of the book and quite un-Thoreauvian. But now I knew that I would understand every word of it, ... "The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us.

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[70] Robert S. Fogarty has recently argued against the traditional chronology associated with the rise and fall of communitarianism in nineteenth-century America. Earlier interpretations placed the height of success of the religiously oriented communal experiments in the 1840s, followed by a steady decline after the Civil War. Fogarty asserts that there continued to be a strong utopian literary tradition in the latter part of the century, as well as real-world projects that continued the tradition of industrial, social, and political reform through experimental living. See Fogarty, *All Things New: American Communes and Utopian Movements 1860-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

> Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star." [from Walden] [71]

Just as Thoreau had remade himself through social isolation and a communion with natural rhythms, so would Burris and the rest of mankind remake themselves through the new light of experimental social behaviorism. *Walden Two* was a revelation about the potential for social technology to remake humanity, and it marked for Skinner the first incarnation of what would later become his mature social theory in the 1950s and 60s.

For Frazier, and Skinner, the Walden Two enterprise represented a microcosm of what a better society could look like when properly engineered. A return to kinship would, however, require the removal of social and economic hierarchies as well as competition between groups. This could be achieved with a form of government that utilized a managerial hierarchy of behavioral engineers and scientists who would be subject to regular peer reviews, thus rotating managerial responsibility and holding everyone accountable for their actions. Everyone would be involved in community maintenance using a credit system that rewarded all types of labor. No special recognition would be given to individuals in a society that celebrated collective achievement. Technologies could be designed to minimize the time and amount of work done in community maintenance, and the increased efficiency of work and workspaces would allow community members more time to pursue artistic and intellectual projects. And, finally, by simplifying and integrating all aspects of living -- from language, dress, and patterns of consumption, to the dynamics of work, play, socialization, and child rearing -- the integrity of social networks would be maintained.

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[71] B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 315.

Thoreau had proclaimed in *Walden* that the individual was in charge of his own destiny and that self-examination, away from the distractions of society, was the key to remaking life. Such an endeavor required isolation, experimentation, and the simplification of needs.[72] Skinner invoked similar sentiments in his plan for an isolated community in which human nature could be reinvented. In conjunction with Thoreau's philosophy, Skinner prescribed additional social goals:

1- Build a lifestyle based on cooperation rather than competition.
2- Maintain it with "gentle but pervasive ethical sanctions" rather than force or punishment.
3- Perpetuate the community with sophisticated methods of childcare and education.
4- Foster conditions which facilitate enjoyment of work.
5- Experiment with all social institutions; adapt freely to new conditions; accept change.[73]

Inherent in these new principles was Skinner's conviction that modern society had failed to progress through conventional means. As Frazier explained,

> As we use the term these days, government means power -- mainly the power to compel obedience, ..., [g]overnments which use force are based upon bad principles of human engineering. Nor are they able to improve upon these principles, or discover their inadequacy, because they aren't able to accumulate any body of knowledge approaching a science... It's never possible to plan and carry out experiments to investigate the better use of power or how to dispense with it altogether.[74]

Capitalist competition and nationalist aggression had not procured social harmony. Traditional moral and ethical sanctions had not functioned adequately.

Recent sociological investigations of the history of utopian experiments in America indicate patterns of growth and decline that conform to long-range industrial

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[72] Skinner, *Shaping of a Behaviorist*, 346.

[73] Ibid.

[74] B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (1948).

cycles in the economy. In addition to assessing the political activity associated with these patterns, sociologist Brian Berry has amassed statistical data on the activities, inventories, and movements of communal societies. His analysis has revealed a strong relationship between economic depression and the subsequent rise in social experimentation in America over the course of the last two centuries.[75]

During periods of economic downturn, poverty, and general social disruption, interest in alternatives to capitalist-based, industrialized society went up. Along with other colleagues, Berry has identified four distinct phases of communal utopian activity that are linked to the industrial revolutions of the 1840s and 1890s, the Depression of the 1930s, and the counterculture movement of the 1960s.[76] During each period, disillusionment over the evils of capitalism and mass urban culture evolved for some into attempts to return to traditional rural values among a small but highly distinct minority. In each case these movements spawned collectives and isolationist sects that actively disconnected themselves from mainstream culture in order to seek out communal solidarity in small-scale rural communities of their own design. Whether religious, secular, or political in orientation, these groups shared a common set of concerns and ideals. Throughout American history, urban expansion, technological and industrial

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[75] Brian J. Berry, *America's Utopian Experiments: Communal Havens from Long Wave Crisis* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992).

[76] Berry notes in the introduction to his most recent book that his research was inspired by the findings of another study on communal societies written by Michael Barkun. See his article, "Communal Societies as Cyclical Phenomena," *Communal Societies* 4 (1984): 35-48. Also see the full-length study of economic trends in Berry's previous book, *Long Wave Rhythms in Economic Development and Political Behavior* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

innovation, and geographic migration have disrupted family and community life.[77] The desire for a more integrated and harmonious existence, coupled with the need of individuals to feel emotionally connected to a community of fellow travelers, was a strong motivating factor in the retreat from mass society.[78] This return to nature, culture, and the land also characterized the pioneer spirit in America.

Unlike other modern utopian novelists, Skinner chose to mix social experimentation, set in the present day (rather than the distant future), with the traditional imagery of nineteenth-century 'pioneerism.' The icon of the pioneer celebrated the virtues of the rugged individual, virtuous and thrifty, imbued with religious devotion and plain guts, forging a life in the wilderness. Prompting the reader with allusions to these

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[77] This seems to be a conclusion shared among historians of utopianism and utopian communities. For an overview of common themes in the history of experimental communities in the United States, consult the introductory comments in David Shi, *In Search of the Simple Life* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1986). As Shi asserts, the history of experimental communities in America is part of a broader search for simplicity in American culture. As a concept, simplicity is deeply engrained in our cultural heritage, and it has its roots in the ideals of the early Puritan settlers. The desire to strip away the trappings of society in order to search for a morally centered existence was a theme of radical religious communal experiments of the eighteenth and nineteenth century as well as the experiences of transcendentalists, progressives, and counterculture activists later on. For a detailed historical treatment of these themes consult Shi's companion work, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Other surveys of American utopianism include Michael Fellman, *The Unbound Frame: Freedom and Community in Nineteenth Century Utopianism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Inc., 1973). The scholarship on utopianism is considerable and has seen a resurgence in the last several years. For a survey of the most recent scholarship see the collected essays by noted utopian scholars in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. Donald E. Pitzer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). See also Timothy Miller, *The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth Century America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998). For a recent treatment of utopianism among the transcendentalists, consult Richard Francis, *Transcendental Utopias: Individual and Community at Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and Walden* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[78] Other scholars of American utopianism have observed that a common influence in experimental communities is an attraction to the ethos of the American frontier. Many groups that experimented with communal living, regardless of their political or religious beliefs, thought that salvation and social harmony were possible by embarking on a journey into a new land and remaking the self and the environment. As with other social movements, American utopians put their faith in the redemptive potential of the land. Many of the late nineteenth-century experiments in socialist utopianism in fact blended industrialization with the Jeffersonian ideal of a return to the land. Communal life in the late nineteenth century also held the promise of moral and spiritual regeneration. Many groups attempted to rework Christian principles or incorporate entirely new religious systems from both the West and the East. These communes appealed to workers, tradesman, and others from the cities who sought economic, communal, and spiritual security. Communalism attempted to capture the energy of new social forces and reshape them to serve humanity.

traditional images of American individualism, Skinner transformed the Thoreauvian principle of self-actualization outlined in *Walden* into a set of hypothetical guidelines for engineering small-scale 'experimental' communities. His was a vision of collective social harmony that accommodated the physical and emotional needs of the individual. In this sense, Skinner addressed the same dilemma faced by previous communitarians, bureaucrats, progressives, philosophers, politicians, and activists -- how to manage complex social spaces while preserving the illusion of individual autonomy.

The parallels between the goals of the early real-world communities and those proposed in *Walden Two* are striking. What must certainly have been attractive to Skinner about communalism, especially the experience of the Shakers and the Oneida group, was their willingness to address aspects of individual and community life from a quasi-scientific, experimental viewpoint, modifying different rules and techniques of community life in strengthening the social system as a whole. Although vastly different in terms of their respective social techniques and religious beliefs, both the Shakers and the Oneida group set out to reshape those mores and institutions that seemed most vital for social harmony and spiritual salvation. Significant changes were made to marital traditions, the education and rearing of children, the organization of work, the distribution of goods and wealth, community government, communication, and the relationship between the sexes. To modern social theorists who had been imbued with the cult of efficiency and the philosophy of scientific control, such experimentation in social engineering was prescient and instructive. Many of the same social institutions brought forth for scrutiny by the Shakers and the leaders of the Oneida communities, as I have shown, are also addressed in *Walden Two*.

Skinner and his utopian predecessors responded to the recurring problems of mass society and urban living in America. Political utopians sought to empower workers in industry and manufacturing who endured the dehumanizing and often deplorable conditions of factory labor. Religious utopians sought to recapture the sense of spiritual community that had been lost in the industrial revolution. Individual identity, work, and community -- these were the common themes of utopian fantasy and experiments. To Skinner, such themes were no less relevant for the postwar age a century later. Despite what many critics saw as his dehumanizing social theories, Skinner's intent in *Walden Two* was to speculate on how the destructive effects of industrialization and urban expansion on humanity might be alleviated through proper social engineering.

Channeling his speculations through his protagonist, Frazier, Skinner unleashed the first full articulation of his philosophy of science and his social theories. As he recalled, "[O]nce I had put down the whole pattern of his thinking, I saw the connections among its parts, and I became, a year or two after I finished the book, a thoroughgoing Frazierian."[79] Indeed, Skinner likened writing the novel to a kind of self-psychoanalysis, a process of discovery in which latent ideas about the potential of behavioral science were brought forth through imagination.[80] What had started as a long, drawn out exposition on an imaginary utopian society became for Skinner the first attempt at integrating his experiments in animal behavior with careful consideration of the human

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[79] Skinner, "Walden Two Revisited," 1.

[80] Editors who reviewed the first few drafts of *Walden Two* (originally entitled "The Sun is but A Morning Star," after a line from the last page of Thoreau's *Walden*) suggested that Skinner concentrate less on the presentation of behavioral theory and more on the inner conflict of the main character, Frazier, who answers the critics of behavioral engineering throughout the story. See editorial notes on "The Sun is but A Morning Star," an unpublished manuscript dated 1947. [HUGFP 60.10]. Box 1. Papers of B. F. Skinner. Correspondence 1928-1958. Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA. Items from these folders are hereafter referred to as HUGFP 60.10.

condition.[81] For Skinner, the essence of all science was gaining control of phenomena and generating data. And as Skinner later recalled, "Control was no doubt at the heart of Frazier's behavioral engineering."[82] The 'working out' of Frazier's character, his defense and clarification of the community in *Walden Two*, became the forum for Skinner's emergent theory of scientific social management.

Skinner and the Crisis of American Democracy

The rise of fascism in the 1920s and 30s sparked debate among American editorialists, intellectuals, and scientists over the very questions that Skinner and Mead raised in their research in the 1930s and 40s. What was the nature of humanity, and was it inherently constructive or destructive, cooperative or competitive? And what was the future of democracy in the modern world?

As historian Edward Purcell observed, discussion about the causes of fascism and totalitarianism in Europe during the 1930s centered in part on the rise of scientific naturalism in philosophy, legal theory, and the social sciences.[83] As early as the 1890s, intellectuals such as William James, John Dewey, and Lester Frank Ward had sought an alternative to the determinism of evolutionary naturalism inherent in Darwinian theory. A general scientific naturalism, they argued, would support human uniqueness and

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[81] Skinner, "Walden Two Revisited," 1.

[82] Skinner, "Shaping of a Behaviorist," 345.

[83] Edward A. Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Nationalism and the Problem of Value* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973).

agency through pragmatism and instrumentalism.[84] In a debate that spanned 25 years between 1910 and 1935, contextualized by the First World War, economic boom and bust, and the Depression, the logical outcomes of scientific naturalism were confronted. Scientific naturalism appeared to threaten the legitimacy of classical democracy, undermining any rational explanation for its moral tenets. The added fact that individuals did not participate directly in governance also seemed to challenge classical democracy. Most of the real power in government was wielded by political and industrial elites. Given these realizations, traditional democratic theory looked to be in crisis by the 1930s. Political developments in America and Europe had exacerbated the problem.[85] Moreover, scientific naturalism also called into question the rationality of human behavior in general.

Most social scientists did not, however, succumb to the implications of extreme moral and philosophical relativism embedded in scientific naturalism. The political scientists Harold Lasswell and Charles Merriam, for example, continued to believe in a genuine ethical basis for democracy. Scientific objectivism in the social sciences also did not degenerate into "value neutrality."[86] As Purcell stated, the shift toward a relativist view of humanity and society was a matter of "tone and emphasis."[87] The discovery of the multifarious nature of humanity and culture had not marked a departure from democracy as a political philosophy. Nevertheless, the question of how to define morality and values in a rational way drove much of the professional disagreement over

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[84] Ibid., 9-10.

[85] Ibid., 11-15.

[86] Ibid., 189-93.

[87] Ibid., 191.

appropriate criteria. Social scientists, to be sure, were dedicated to the political cause against totalitarianism, but they could identify no clear scientific, legal, or moral justification for democracy. In the end, a strictly logical and rational explanation for the validity of American democracy was not possible on epistemological grounds. The tenor of the debate shifted in the late 1930s instead toward political explanations, supported by social scientific research, about the immorality of authoritarian and absolutist regimes.[88]

Ironically, the defense of democracy as a bastion of rationality and morality in the war and postwar years, at least among those like Dewey and Jacques Barzun, became an endorsement of the *status quo* in America. Many intellectuals, imbued with renewed nationalism after the Second World War, placed science and technology at the heart of modern democracy.[89] The true dilemma in countering political absolutism had to do with issues already familiar from the present study. What was the proper balance between cultural diversity and the need for consensus in government? What level of economic *competition* could effectively coexist with institutions of social *cooperation* and systems of social management?

As we have seen in scientists like Skinner and Mead, these questions engendered a choice between mechanistic and holistic visions of the self. Assent to the status quo was also tied to professional expansion and the desire for social authority among social scientists in the postwar years. The New Deal, the Cold War, and McCarthyism pushed intellectuals toward this status quo.[90] This fact will become especially important in later

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[88] Ibid., 200-05.

[89] Ibid., 216, 235-37.

[90] Ibid., 239-40.

chapters of the present treatment where Margaret Mead's nationalism and her awareness of these debates over democracy will be addressed. As we shall see presently, however, Skinner's rejection of democracy did not stem merely from the dictates of behavioral science. It is clear from *Walden Two* that he was also cognizant of debates on democracy among Marxist political scientists in the immediate postwar years.

Many had seconded Julian Huxley's proclamation in *Man Stands Alone* (1941), that, while neither inherently good nor bad, a "general aggressive tendency" was present in human nature.[91] It also seemed that humankind was "obsolete," having built a civilization that outstripped the pace of its biological and psychological evolution. Despite having the greatest reserves of natural and human resources in the world, Walter Lippmann also observed, America in the late 1930s and early 40s was gripped by a fear of failure. Americans seemed alarmingly pessimistic about the future of the nation. This left American democracy susceptible to decay.[92]

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[91] This view from Julian Huxley's popular book of the time, *Man Stands Alone* (New York: Harper and Bothers, 1941), was mentioned in a 1945 editorial piece for the *Saturday Review of Literature* by an anonymous contributor who voiced what had clearly become a common view of human nature. Similar opinions were explored in the pages of such mainstream publications as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Life*, indicating an active public discussion. See the article by Norman Cousins, "Modern Man is Obsolete: An Editorial," *Saturday Review of Literature* 28 (August 18, 1945): 5-9. See also an editorial, "Untragic America: Our Democratic Faith Needs Correcting If We Are To Produce Great Tragic Drama," *Life* 21 (December 2, 1946): 32.

[92] Representative examples of this very large body of literature include Stanley High, "Where There Is No Vision-," *The Reader's Digest* 49 (July, 1946): 57-61; Thomas H. Briggs, "The Enemy Within," *School and Society* 51 (January 27, 1940): 97-109; Upton Sinclair, "America's False Democracy," *The American Mercury* 44 (June, 1938): 208-11; Eleanor Roosevelt, "Keepers of Democracy," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 15, no. 1 (Winter, 1939): 1-5; Edmund E. Day, "What Really Threatens American Democracy?," *Vital Speeches* 5 (February 22, 1939): 371-73; Henry Morgenthau Jr., "The Road Ahead: The Generation Which Found Itself," *Vital Speeches* 4 (June 6, 1938): 597-99. It is also worth citing a special edition of *Survey Graphic* in 1939 entitled "Calling America." The entire issue was dedicated to a discussion of democracy and its future in America, given the unfolding events in Europe. It included over thirty essays with such luminaries as Bertrand Russell and Thomas Mann as contributors. See "Calling America: A Special Number of *Survey Graphic* on the Challenge to Democracy," *Survey Graphic* 27, no. 2 (February, 1939): 54-170.

Ironically, an apologetic editorial entitled "Untragic America" in the squarely nationalistic *Life* magazine in 1946 warned that Americans seemed to have lost their sense of "human greatness," in the decade before the Second World War. Moreover, in the aftermath of the war, Americans, Lippmann claimed, "now believe[d] in nothing in particular."[93] Such critiques masked a political agenda among liberal-democratic scientists and journalists such as Lippmann and Margaret Mead, however, who used anti-isolationist rhetoric to spur Americans into readiness for war. The same tactics were employed during the economic crisis of 1945-1946 to rekindle American confidence. Mead had talked also of the failure of American national character in her book *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* in 1942.[94] Democracy had, after all, been seriously challenged by fascism and communism on the world stage. In this "war of ideologies," Americans could reflect on how each political system (democratic, communist, fascist) handled the problems of economic reconstruction. At times, it seemed that democracy and free-market capitalism on the home front was failing.[95] And as the famous intellectual historian Carl Becker noted in a 1941 article for *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, frustration with the efficacy of democracy and capitalism had led to outright revolution in Italy and Germany. Given America's struggles during the

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[93] From an editorial in *Life Magazine* 21 (December 2, 1946): 32. See Carl Becker's comments in "The Dilemma of Modern Democracy," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 17, no. 1 (January, 1941): 11-17.

[94] Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist looks at America* (New York: Morrow, 1942).

[95] Briggs, "The Enemy Within," 97.

Depression, Becker asked, might the same thing happen in America if things got any worse?[96]

> The problem may be otherwise stated: Can the flagrant inequality of possessions and of opportunity now existing in democratic societies be corrected by the democratic method? If it cannot be corrected by the democratic method, the resulting discontent and confusion will be certain, sooner or later, to issue in some form of revolutionary or military dictatorship. This then is the dilemma which confronts democratic societies: to solve their economic problems by the democratic method or to cease to be democratic societies.

Whereas communists and fascists seemed to have clarity of purpose and a vision for the future of their states, Americans, as Upton Sinclair proclaimed, had lost their "crusading spirit."[97] The result, as Eleanor Roosevelt put it, was that "people have reached a point where [...] if Fascism or Nazi-ism promises more security than our own democracy we may even turn to them."[98]

Yet, prominent liberal-Democratic intellectuals and commentators such as Lippmann also noted that comparative anthropology (specifically Mead's work) had revealed that self-destruction was not inevitable. Change in human nature, perhaps even within a generation, was still possible. But it entailed radical alterations in our geopolitical, economic, and educational philosophies.[99] In an international political

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[96] Carl Becker, "Dilemma of Democracy," 11. Becker's sentiments were well founded, if reports from Washington in the late 1930s were any indication. Government officials were indeed beginning to worry that what was transpiring in Europe might also happen in the United States. See the editorial, "Can Democracy Survive," *The Commonweal* 27 (December 17, 1937): 199-200. See similar reports of such fears in Edmund E. Day, "What Really Threatens American Democracy?," *Vital Speeches* 5 (February 22, 1939): 371-73.

[97] Sinclair, "America's False Democracy," 208. Also refer to comments by Stanley High, "No Vision," 60-61.

[98] Eleanor Roosevelt, "Keepers of Democracy," 2.

[99] Lippmann wrote extensively on these and other issues regarding the fate of the Unites States and American democracy. See for example, "Man's Image of Man: An Address to the American Catholic Philosophical Association," *The Commonweal* 35 (February 13, 1942): 406-9; "Education vs. Western

environment, our social institutions would need to reflect the cultivation of "world man" and "world conscience," as one commentator for the *Saturday Review of Literature* observed.[100] This emphasis on human modification with educational methods and a global perspective on human society commanded the particular attention of Skinner and Mead in the opening decades of the postwar era.

By the end of the Depression and the start of the Second World War many public intellectuals felt that a revolution in the organization of societal affairs was needed. Most, like Roosevelt, Lippmann, Morgenthau, Sinclair, and Mead, agreed that modifying democracy to function in a modern world was imperative. Skinner however did not believe that modifications to any conventional political system would be sufficient. Future society would require both a complete break with present systems and the construction of a scientifically trained managerial elite. Indeed in many ways, he argued, this had already happened. To the extent that *Walden Two* was a forum for the fleshing out of Skinner's social theories, it was also a response to postwar debates concerning the future of American democracy. Skinner began his career as a social philosopher in the 1940s believing that the experiences of the Depression and the New Deal, international politics, and the upheaval of war would encourage Americans to explore new avenues of social economy. The task of rebuilding a nation in an international context, he and others like Mead had thought, could foster a more experimental and scientifically informed approach to the re-design of American life.

Civilization," *American Scholar* 10, no. 2 (April, 1941): 184-93; "The American Destiny," (condensed from *Life Magazine*) *The Reader's Digest* 35, no. 238 (August, 1942): 1-5.

[100] Cousins, "Man-Obsolete," 7-8.

Skinner echoed fellow psychologist, Henry A. Murray (1893-1988), who contended that it was the American penchant for practicality where "questions ... are approached with an empirical, experimentalist attitude that focuses on contingencies of fact," that, ironically, had prevented a true understanding of the totalitarian menace of Communism.[101] As Skinner opined, "the Wilsonian era of diplomacy with its exaggerated trust in world assemblies and in spectacular international conferences," had in fact encouraged "a mood of general, if not unbroken, goodwill toward Russia ... almost pathological."[102] It seemed to Skinner that there was still a lingering intellectual curiosity about, and perhaps sympathy for, the Soviets and their attempts to redress the destructive forces of despotism and unbridled capitalism in the nineteenth century. This convinced Skinner and others that the time was ripe for social experimentation in postwar America.

Alternatives to classical democracy were explored by Marxist historians and political scientists during the 1940s. The political scientist Joseph Schumpeter argued in his 1942 classic treatise *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, for example, for a revised democracy that would combine the economic momentum of capitalism with the bureaucratic controls of a socialist managerial state.[103] It would be headed by political leaders elected on the basis of professional merit. On its own, Shumpeter argued,

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[101] Ibid. Skinner noted that Henry Murray went on to conclude that the McCarthy communist hunts of the early 1950s had been a good thing for Americans, having exposed them to the true aims of Communist cultural subversion.

[102] B. F. Skinner, "Notes on Fund for the Republic lecture, 1958-1960." From an undated collection of Skinner's private notes on a lecture given to the Fund for the Republic. Lecture Notes and Manuscripts. n. d. [HUGFP 60.50]. Box 1, Folder 1. Papers of B. F. Skinner. Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA. Items from these folders are hereafter referred to as HUGFP 60.50.

unbridled laissez-faire capitalism and corporatism eroded the fabric of family and community life, destroying its own framework. Agrarian popular democracy and the will of the majority also failed, since it was in essence an illusion, incompatible with a complex urban and industrial culture. The electorate, as Shumpeter noted, no longer controlled its leaders directly, except in elections.

Citing the exemplar of the British parliamentary system, Shumpeter argued that a revised democracy could tame the destructive effects of capitalism through a combination of competitive political leadership and a well-trained bureaucracy of civic-minded scientific managers. These managers would independently run public works, social agencies, and municipalities at the local city level. Invoking the language of work and waste reminiscent of nineteenth-century machine metaphors in physical science and social theory, Schumpeter argued that the inefficiencies of democratic "engines of government" could be resolved through a new hierarchy of leadership.[104] Elections would decide professional leadership. The electorate would not subject all aspects of economic and civic maintenance, however, to popular vote. Leaders and bureaucratic agencies would be free to govern and manage without the inefficiency of placating popular opinion. The populace in turn would put faith in the leadership, as well as the system of promotion and advancement that placed responsible, well-trained people in charge of society. Shumpeter's model also reflected a common understanding among political scientists that freedom was, in fact, relative in any political system.[105] The task

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[103] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1942). It should be noted that reprints appeared in 1947 and 1950. Also important to note is that Mead seemed particularly fond of the British social welfare system as well. This is explored further in Chapter 5 of the present study.

[104] Ibid., 286-88.

[105] Ibid., 302.

in running the urban complex was always to strike a balance between appropriate individual freedoms and the institutional controls of collective social management.

A careful reading of *Walden Two* makes clear Skinner's awareness of these kinds of models. Skinner provided a behaviorist's interpretation of what Frazier described in the novel as a democracy *perfected* through the careful planning of trained and conscientious social engineers.[106] His protagonist mouthpiece, T. E. Frazier, also described popular democracy as an illusion, "the spawn of despotism," that eventually left power elites in charge of a vast, unwieldy system.[107] Likewise, as Frazier observed, popular "democracy,"

> [F]ails to take account of the fact that in the long run *man is determined by the state.* A *laissez-faire* philosophy which trusts to the inherent goodness and wisdom of the common man is incompatible with the observed fact that men are made good or bad and wise or foolish by the environment in which they grow.[108]

Communism was also no alternative. Although born of humanitarian intentions and social experimentation, it had been undermined by the Russian reliance on propaganda, hero worship, and consolidation of power, things that resulted in totalitarian rule.[109]

Skinner, of course, argued that his system would avoid both the inefficiency of popular democracy and the devastation of economic/political despotism.[110] Through proper environmental engineering, community planners would rise through the

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[106] Skinner, *Walden Two*, 269.

[107] Ibid., 268.

[108] Ibid., 273.

[109] Ibid., 274-76.

[110] Ibid., 274.

managerial hierarchy in similar fashion to Schumpeter's competitive meritocracy ideal. Governance in Skinner's system, however, would lie squarely with expert scientific managers, even though anyone theoretically could rise to their ranks. Using the language of work and waste, Skinner hailed labor efficiency as a central characteristic of his vision. The embrace of technology, Frazier claimed, would streamline labor and industry so that a valuable "surplus" of human energy intended for leisure and individual creative pursuits would not be wasted.[111] Individuals would enjoy the illusion of freedom without enduring its collective evils.[112] In Skinner's case, then, the implications of scientific naturalism were taken to their logical extreme. The only rationale for a society's structure and ethic, Frazier argued, was the survival imperative inherent in adaptive behavior itself.[113]

Skinner's technocracy still struck most readers as authoritarian, despite Frazier's arguments to the contrary. Social conservatism, xenophobia and insecurity had taken hold of a nation enduring McCarthyism, and the paranoia over national security worked against radical social change. Fear of the communist 'other,' embodied in McCarthyism, masked Americans' fear of themselves.[114]

Postwar cultural entrenchment in America did not, however, deter Skinner and Mead from the exploration of human nature and society in their effort to examine,

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[111] Ibid., 75.

[112] Ibid., 84.

[113] Ibid., 174.

[114] The fear of cultural subversion, as Richard Fried notes, took many forms during the Cold War. Music, art, academia, styles of dress, and political ideology, for example, were all subject to close scrutiny amidst the fear of social degeneration. See Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Steven Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

critique, and influence postwar American social life. In the pages of *Walden Two* and numerous academic seminars and public speeches in the 1940s and 1950s, Skinner challenged political economic theory and struck at the heart of American democratic institutions. Both in *Science and Human Behavior* and in his numerous articles and speeches, Skinner described the social controls that he insisted were embedded in all the groups, organizations, and agencies familiar to citizens in a supposedly open democracy.

In one instance Skinner summarized the relationships between controllers and the controlled with an illustrative graphic entitled "Areas of Control by Special Groups or 'Agencies'" that accompanied his public lectures. In the extract below we see that Skinner classified each group or agency (governments, religious organizations, economic entities, educational institutions) according to its systems of behavioral manipulation.[115]

	Government	**Religion**	**Education**
Controllers:	Rulers, etc.	Priests, etc.	Teachers, Deans Etc.
Controllees:	Citizens	Communicants	Students
Power	Police and Military (power to punish); Wealth (power to reinforce)	Ability to mediate or specify ultimate contingencies of reinforcement and punishment	Personal reinforcers, grades, release from threat of failure.
Processes and Techniques	Punishment, conditioning of stimuli associated with punishment	Release from threat or punishment, conditioning of positive and negative reinforcers	Presenting materials, reinforcing responses
Resulting Effects on Behavior	Suppression of illegal behavior	Suppression of sinful, strengthening of pious behavior	Production of intelligent, Learned, Skillful behavior
Countercontrol	Revolution, escape	Apostacy	Truancy, vandalism
Maximized Entities or Principles	Justice Security Freedom	Piety Salvation	Knowledge Skill

Skinner believed that the same types of social controls explored in *Walden Two* had their real-world behavioral counterparts, to one degree or another, in every real system of social organization. Such engineering was ubiquitous, he contended, in every advanced civilization.

With such a formulation one could compare such disparate opposing entities as secular Soviet Russia and the Catholic Church and discover similar objectives and power structures in each that were designed to shape behavior to particular ends. In one set of private notes, Skinner outlined such similarities. Like the communists, the Catholic Church considered conversion and expansion one of its central functions. A set of well defined doctrines and worldviews made up the central tenets of the Communist state, just as it did in the Church. These in turn helped define procedures of social control. Throughout history, Skinner surmised, each system had used military conquest, political coercion, centralized administration, and economic exploitation to maintain control. Each had relied on propaganda to solidify allegiance among its followers. And all of it was ultimately designed to save mankind from the "Promethean West," in the case of the Communists, and in the Catholic Church, "to rescue humanity from atheistic communism."[116]

Skinner thus invited his audience to consider how it was possible for two diametrically opposed groups such as the Soviets and members of the Church, two central rivals of the Cold War, to share such fundamental similarities in their social hierarchy

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[115] B. F. Skinner, "Areas of Control by Special Groups or 'Agencies'." An undated chart constructed by Skinner. Lecture Notes N8114. n. d. [HUGFP 60.50]. Box 1. Papers of B. F. Skinner. Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.

[116] B. F. Skinner. From a chart written by or for Skinner comparing the history of the Soviet Union and the Catholic Church. n. d., HUGFP 60.50, Box 1.

and methods of social control. Skinner contended that it made little difference in the end whether or not the professed worldviews, philosophies, or doctrines of a group acknowledged or opposed the necessity of behavioral controls. Of greater importance in the examination of cultures and groups was an evaluation of the actual processes of control and administration that existed from the outset.

How effectively, Skinner asked, did these mechanisms of control contribute to social efficiency, and who controlled these mechanisms? What, for example, was the true effect of the election process in American democracy? Did such political participation result in any real social change? According to Skinner, the answer from the behavioral standpoint with regard to "an industrialized democracy," was 'no.' To Skinner the American election process, as a mechanism of democratic social control, was a myth. "The political process is almost invisible in America. The elaborate mechanisms of interaction among the branches of government, public opinion, popular morality and elected officials is [*sic*] mysterious," Skinner asserted.[117] Despite the fact that the government seemed to be "orderly" and "seldom tyrannical," Skinner felt that it was a mistake to assume that any efficiency in government resulted from the participation of the general population. "One of the most potent beliefs," Skinner claimed, "is that citizens run the government. Everybody knows the facts are otherwise, but everybody talks as if the belief were substantiated. ...So it is with the American myths about political participation."[118]

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[117] B. F. Skinner. From an outlined address to the Burdick-Hoffman League[?]. 15 April 1958, HUGFP 60.50, Box 1.

[118] Ibid.

> A vote is primarily a poll of satisfaction with the status quo – or, rarely, of approval of a program. ... The present ballot [system] does not offer the voter an opportunity to act in any useful capacity. ... Some schedule for the eventual reduction of offices might be easier to put across. e.g. all county offices taken over by state or city by 1969?

Skinner believed that systems of democratic social management worked more efficiently on a smaller scale (as in Shumpeter's city management model), since the processes of control could more easily be supervised and administered. And rather than encourage the uneducated and uninformed to vote, the responsibility for selecting leaders should be left to "the best and wisest who are responsive to and responsible to all."[119] Skinner advocated a kind of scientific meritocracy where "loyalty to experts, to administrative superiors, [and] to articulate constituency" was properly balanced.[120] In one instance Skinner went so far as to venture a behavioral interpretation of the system of controls he felt were embedded in the constitutional Bill of Rights. "The New Bill," Skinner postulated, "concerns techniques which are still available to all":

A New Bill of Rights
1. Government shall not use positive reinforcement
2. Government shall not use emotional appeals.
3. Government shall not manipulate levels of deprivation and satiation
4. Government shall not put tranquilizers in water supply [!][121]

In these talks and exercises, and in the pages of *Walden Two*, then, is an indictment of the American political system, a behaviorally inspired rejection of the ideal of democracy. Skinner seemed to be asking many of the same questions that his intellectual contemporaries such as Shumpeter had. Had past experience indicated that

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[119] B. F. Skinner. From a miscellaneous collection of Skinner's handwritten notes for a talk given to the Fund for the Republic. 28 April 1959, HUGFP, Box 1, Folder 1.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

democracy really worked? Did it fulfill its promise of a truly representative government? Classical democracy assumed that the public controlled the processes of leadership and management. Yet what seemed clear to Skinner and others was that the American public had very little control.

Such sentiments were confirmed by studies of voting patterns by Bernard R. Berelson and others political scientists in the 1940s and 50s who contended that managerial hierarchies had effectively removed the need for average citizens to participate in the political process.[122] Society was not, however, managed by properly trained leaders, and Berelson et al. suggested that democracy could be revised through the scientific scrutiny of empirical sociology.

Another reason that Americans could not yet graduate to a scientifically perfected democracy was that concepts of freedom, liberty, and dignity kept us from making the democratic process effective and efficient. The threat of diminished human dignity had prevented us from addressing human behavior scientifically and incorporating this knowledge into our system of government. Was the traditional concept of freedom a liability in producing a better society? If so, why were Americans not experimenting with something else? Was freedom really necessary?

> Freedom is not something the human species needs, as it needs food and water. The species has survived and flourished even though only a small fraction of its members have known any substantial degree of political freedom. ... When governments resort to non-coercive techniques which do not make men act "against their wills," the only distinction is between

[122] *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*, ed. Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William E. McPhee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954). See especially the comments on 305-22. It is also worth noting that Shumpeter's study is also cited here.

> aversive and non-aversive control. Traditional political philosophy is ill-prepared to consider [this].[123]

In what was later referred to as the 'sequel' to *Walden Two*, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*,[124] Skinner made the clearest and most comprehensive statement of his theory of mechanical man and society. Utopian visions of the twentieth century, Skinner observed, had been decidedly behavioristic in scope. They had acknowledged the failure of political theory, law, religion, and economics by way of Plato, More, Rousseau, and others to allay social ills.[125] In appealing to the scientific expediency of behaviorism, modern utopians had simplified social design considerably by confining experimentation to the rigors of the small-scale community, removing the need for complex social philosophies and replacing them with the factual, real-world exigencies of human behavior.

Skinner's Utopia and the Plight of the Postwar American Family

While *Walden Two* served as a behavioral interpretation of the American body politic, it also provided Skinner, as has been stated, a forum through which to critique trends in postwar American culture. In reflecting on the structure of communal life, Skinner's protagonist, Frazier, found ample cause to disparage outmoded social customs in a rapidly changing social landscape. There were indeed many social and economic

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[123] B. F. Skinner, "The Concept of Freedom from the Point of View of a Science of Human Behavior," 16 July 1958, HUGFP 60.50, Box 1, Folder 2. From a private address by Skinner to the Fund for the Republic.

[124] B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Bantam, 1971).

[125] Ibid., 146.

trends in the immediate postwar period that had an impact on the family.[126] America in the late 1940s was unstable economically, and living standards were initially much lower than is most often assumed. In addition to labor unrest and periodic recessions, families also endured housing shortages. Education, health, and child-care facilities were in short supply.[127] The lack of such support networks played a direct role in increasing the psychological strain on postwar families.

Not surprisingly, sociological and popular commentaries on the fate of the family began to proliferate. Skinner joined the growing ranks of commentators and scientists who pointed to certain trends in family life that suggested its eventual dissolution as a fundamental unit of American culture.[128] In Frazier's words,

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[126] Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

[127] Ibid., 152.

[128] There was a large body of sociological studies and commentaries on the fate of the American family during this period. One of the most famous was that of the prominent sociologist, Talcott Parsons, whose seminal study, *Family Socialization and Interaction Process* (Glenco, IL: The Free Press, 1955), received considerable professional and popular attention. For other examples consult the essays by prominent critics in the social sciences by the Community Service Society of New York, *The Family in a Democratic Society: Anniversary Papers of the Community Service Society of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949). For more focussed analyses that utilize case studies and statistics see Earl L. Koos, *Families in Trouble* (Morningside Heights, NY: King's Crown Press, 1946); Reuben Hill, *Families Under Stress: Adjustment to the Crisis of War Separation and Reunion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Pub., 1949). Another comprehensive study published during the war was Jessie Bernard's *American Family Behavior* (New York: Harper & Brothers Pub., 1942). For recent historical appraisals of the changes in the American family in the postwar era see Elaine T. May's informative analysis of case histories from several families entitled *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988). May chronicles the tremendous sacrifices that American families made in the postwar decades in order to stay together despite increasing isolation from other facets of social life. For a study of the effects of the postwar conditions on gender roles, consult the collected essays in *Topics in the History of the American Family*, especially Judith Sealander, "Families, World War II, and the Baby Boom (1940-1955)" and Steven Mintz, "New Rules: Postwar Families (1955-Present)." For an examination of the history of postwar family life see Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988) and Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: Basic Books, 1991). A recent study that attempts to disentangle the cultural myth of the ideal American family is Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

> The family is the frailest of modern institutions. Its weakness is evident to everyone. Will it survive as the culture changes? We watch it with all the panic that besets a mother as her backward child steps to the platform and begins to speak a piece. Well, a great deal happens to the family in Walden Two, Mr. Castle, I can tell you that.[129]

It was clear to Skinner and other 'social experts' that many of the older functions of the extended family, an entity that had integrated work, child rearing, socialization, the production of goods and materials, and social welfare, had been gradually undermined by large scale bureaucracy in American culture by the 1940s. The compact and efficient 'nuclear' family model became heavily scrutinized as a preserver of American social and cultural values. Interpersonal relationships and emotional fulfillment became the primary function of marriage and child rearing. Families also became smaller and more mobile.

The model of the small, efficient, well-adjusted family was an ideal that many new parents and spouses, however, felt ill prepared to take on. The stress of making a quick transition to postwar domestic life was difficult for Americans who could no longer rely on an extended family network for support. Such profound changes had given way, it seemed, to a new set of adverse social consequences. The waning stigma of divorce, for example, paralleled a sharp rise in the number of failed marriages in the late 1940s and early 50s.[130] Increased rates of crime, juvenile delinquency, and psychological trauma were some of the major social ills that scientific experts linked to the degenerative state of the family and the loss of American values.[131] The future of the family, as

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[129] Skinner, *Walden Two*, 137.

[130] The rise in the divorce rate beginning in the mid-1940s has been well documented. At one point these rates took on alarming proportions with a sharp rise to 1 in 4 by 1946. For more on the rise of divorce rates after the war consult Mintz and Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions*.

[131] There is a vast literature on the culture of the Cold War during the 1950s. The mass anxiety of Cold War culture over the threat of foreign aggression was in many ways linked to the intense desire for political and social stabilization on the domestic front. For examples of historical appraisals of the links between

Skinner noted in *Walden Two*, had become the focal point for many of the most pressing issues of the modern age.

> The significant history of our times...is the story of the growing weakness of the family. The decline of the home as a medium for perpetuating culture, the struggle for equality for women, including their right to select professions other than housewife or nursemaid, the extraordinary consequences of birth control and the practical separation of sex and parenthood, the social recognition of divorce, the critical issue of blood relationship or race -- all these are parts of the same field. And you can hardly call it quiescent.[132]

The decline of the family was indeed a flash point for postwar social commentators both in the academic and popular press. At a meeting of the American Hygiene Association in 1947, the Harvard sociology professor, Dr. Carl Zimmerman, proclaimed, for example, that the family as a social unit would most probably break up by the end of the century.[133] The phenomena associated with family breakups such as alcoholism, spousal conflict, juvenile delinquency, and psychological problems all suggested to Zimmerman that the American family had reached its "maximum demoralization." There also seemed to be no alternative system to replace it.

This sentiment was later echoed in 1953 with John Sirjamaki's seminal synthesis of contemporary scientific opinion on the future of the family, *The American Family in*

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the Cold War and American family life see Paul Boyer, *By the Bombs Early Light; American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Larry May, *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). Some of the most famous contemporary discussions of the effects of social transition on families and individuals include David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950); Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers: An Exploration of Class Behavior in America and the Hidden Barriers That Affect You, Your Community, Your Future* (New York: D. Mckay Co., 1959); William H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1956); John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Mentor, 1958).

[132] Skinner, *Walden Two*, 138.

[133] "The Vanishing Family," *Time* 49 (1947): 56. See also Carl Zimmerman, "The Future of the Family is a Matter of Serious Debate," *Life* 25 (July 26, 1948): 96.

the 20th Century (1953).[134] The family, Sirjamaki contended, had been radically altered since the turn of the century, and now consisted of a small number of socially isolated individuals. Marriage and family relations, once a matter of community sanction and maintenance, had become thoroughly private affairs that were excluded from outside influence. Nuclear families were expected to maintain their independence and integrity without the need of external social mechanisms.[135] The new family in its compact form, it seemed, was often short-lived, not lasting much beyond one generation, since children were encouraged to migrate and start new families.[136]

The tendency toward the independence of the individual and the family thus produced what the prominent sociologist, Talcott Parsons, had referred to in the 1950s as the 'structural isolation' of the family in modern suburban culture. The lack of solidarity among members of the extended family group was now a central characteristic of the American kinship system in general and the source, Parsons believed, of many of the problems associated with postwar family life.[137] Parents were left without the support mechanisms previously used to aid the transition to family life.[138] Yet the family's ability to adapt quickly to social and economic conditions and prepare children for the challenges of a highly mobile and ever-changing culture became of utmost importance.

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[134] John Sirjamaki, *The American Family in the 20th Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

[135] Ibid., 193-95.

[136] Paul C. Glick, "The Family Cycle," *American Sociological Review* 12 (1947): 164-74.

[137] Talcott Parsons, "The Kinship System of the Contemporary United States," *American Anthropologist* 45 (Jan-March, 1945): 22-38. See especially page 28.

[138] See the preface to Reuben Hill's *Families Under Stress: Adjustment to the Crises of War Separation and Reunion* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1949).

Skinner addressed these and other issues of postwar social adjustment in *Walden Two*. With his description of a small scale and integrated community that combined the collective activities of work, community maintenance, child rearing, money, and intellectual and emotional fulfillment, Skinner proposed a psychological and behavioral alternative to a highly complex socioeconomic and cultural conundrum in America. As Frazier quipped, "[n]o one can seriously doubt that a well managed community will get along successfully as an economic unit. A child could prove it. The real problems are psychological."[139]

Many contemporary critics, in fact, had called upon the government to design more effective social policies and community programs that would replace older family support networks. Such infrastructure would include new community service centers, churches, family welfare offices, hospitals, and schools, all of which had been neglected by national policy makers.[140] In Walden Two all of the essential functions of a community, Skinner argued, could be studied and maintained by well-trained scientific specialists, the utopian analogues of real-world civil servants. As Frazier explained, in a manner reminiscent of Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*,

> Our only government is a Board of Planners, ...There are Managers of Food, Health, Play, Arts, Dentistry, Dairy, various industries. Supply, Labor, Nursery School, Advanced Education and dozens of others. They requisition labor according to their needs, and their job is the managerial function which survives after they've assigned as much as possible to others. They're the hardest workers among us...[a manager] must have ability and real concern for the welfare of the community.[141]

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[139] Skinner, *Walden Two*, 80.

[140] Hill, *Families Under Stress*, 345.

[141] Skinner, *Walden Two*, 55.

There were two key differences between this hypothetical system and bureaucratic social management. Managers in Walden Two were scientists and experimentalists first and foremost, and they were much more intimately connected to the communities that they studied and served. Thus, not only was the study of society a problem of psychology, but it was also, in Skinner's estimation, one of scale. Small experimental communities, or laboratories of culture, he argued, would help us discover the laws of social engineering, just as the laws of child rearing and pigeon training had been delineated through small scale experimental control and manipulation. The laboratory as a metaphor that was used to command social authority has had a long history in nineteenth and twentieth-century science. As I contend in chapter five, both Mead and Skinner used the imagery of the laboratory to market visions of society and culture as a wellspring of human potentiality, and as a machine device, respectively.

Such an approach might also reform the old-style patriarchal structure of domestic life where gender roles were clearly defined. These distinctions had been propagandized in postwar American culture as the formula for true happiness in the home, just as it had in the Victorian era. Americans were inundated in the 1940s and 50s with media images of the "good life," depicted in popular magazines (especially women's magazines) and television, where the family dynamic was carefully presented to reflect traditional gender roles and relationships. The story lines of many family-based popular television programs often portrayed males, for example, as distant and emotionally unsophisticated breadwinners, while wives/mothers were the keepers of family harmony, psychological well being, and preservers of good relations between parents and children. Any deviance from these roles, especially among women, it was suggested, exposed the nuclear family

to instability and a host of social problems chronicled daily in news columns and popular magazines.

> "Feelings of insecurity!" Frazier continued with increasing warmth. "The marriage system trades on them! What does the ordinary middle class marriage amount to? ... To make matters worse, we educate our women as if they were equal, and promise them equality. Is it any wonder they are soon disillusioned?[142]

The social and psychological consequences of marital stress were of special concern, since stable marriages, like families, were seen as barometers of cultural health. The toll on women was especially great as their roles began to change from mothers and housewives to active participants in the workforce, having access to new educational and employment opportunities. Yet any number of psychological and developmental maladies in children including delinquency, poor learning skills, psychological neurosis, behavioral and development difficulties were publicly associated with a lack of parental care and attention, especially from absent mothers.[143] In *Walden Two*, Skinner spent much of the text pondering these concerns. Frazier's experimental community had of course alleviated these problems through proper environmental engineering.

> The community [in Walden Two], as a revised family has changed the place of women more radically than that of men. [T]heir new position is more dignified, more enjoyable, and more healthful, and the whole question of security eventually vanishes. In a world of complete economic equality, you get and keep the affections you deserve. You can't buy love with gifts or favors, you can't hold love by raising an inadequate child, and you can't be secure in love by serving as a good scrub woman or a good provider.

But as we have seen, Skinner had trouble convincing those other than his small community of faithful followers (made up of intellectuals, scientists, and some

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[142] Ibid., 146-47.

[143] Ibid., 162.

laypersons) that his technological and literary marvels were anything more than the fanciful, albeit intriguing, dreams of a scientist cum social theorist. Skinner's progressive views on gender, community development, racial equality, family planning, and social democracy were lost, for the most part, on a generation of postwar Americans in the 1940s and 50s. While Americans hoped for a departure from the social and economic failures of the inter-war period, they nevertheless hearkened to the aesthetic of older models of family and community for reassurance in the face of an unknown future.[144] The many associations that people had already drawn in previous decades between social science and various forms of communism, socialism, and fascism, made *Walden Two* look like a scientifically inspired totalitarian nightmare.

The extent of American fears about social transition was palpable in reviews of *Walden Two*, where the novel was not simply panned but openly ridiculed as a perversion of science. One commentator from *Time* magazine described the book in the mid-1950s as "a depressingly serious prescription for communal regimentation, as though the author had read Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and missed the point."[145] Huxley's work had, of course, been a satire on psychological behaviorism (of the Pavlovian variety) and the perceived potential for its social and industrial abuses. Another reviewer from *Life* magazine blasted Skinner for the "egregious liberty he has taken with the title of Henry David Thoreau's original *Walden*," and the apparent removal of self-definition and personal freedom from humanity that seemed central to Thoreau's vision of what might

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[144] For more on the use of pioneer and Victorian iconography in the consumer culture of the 1950s consult Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

[145] "Box Reared Babies: Skinner Baby Box," a review of *Walden Two*, by B. F. Skinner, *Time* 63 (February 22, 1954): 66.

be called a 'utopia for one.' Skinner's "society tender," as the reviewer called it, was thoroughly anti-utopian in this regard, and its menacing imagery was as well reminiscent of Huxleyan thraldom. Skinner's Walden seemed to be a place where scientific managers had a stranglehold on individual autonomy.

With the cold and sterile imagery of the Baby Box fresh in the minds of his readers, much the same reductionism of humanity was read into Skinner's vision of an experimental community. In these early public offerings he had thoroughly underestimated the extent to which postwar social transition would solidify traditional patterns and values and undermine radical social reform. This is not to say that social rebellion and challenge to social norms did not exist among feminists, the beats, and among the young in the 1950s. Comprehensive and radical social experimentation however was incompatible with mainstream sensibilities on the whole. The postwar era had clearly shaped Skinner's scientific endeavors as a technologist and social theorist, but he had been a decade too early with ideas that would later strike chords with the "baby boom" generation during the social upheavals of the 1960s. Only then would younger minds entertain what for Skinner had become by the early 1950s a radically new interpretation of individuality, human nature, and the self.

Humanity as Machine -- The Self Dissolved

From his ruminations on the challenges faced by Americans in the postwar era Skinner moved in the early 1950s to the fullest articulation of his model of human nature in the academic setting while also cultivating his public career as a social theorist and

technologist. This image of humanity is explored most fully in Skinner's textbook treatment of human behavior, *Science and Human Behavior* (1953), a book that he had hoped would be a best selling "potboiler" of a psychology text on college campuses.[146] The approach to human society outlined in the text would define Skinner's career as a social theorist and polemicist.

In order to fulfill his publishing contract with Macmillan, Skinner had promised to follow up *Walden Two* with a textbook in psychology. The book that emerged seven years after the first edition of *Walden Two*, *Science and Human Behavior*, was in fact a full exposition of Skinner's thoughts on bringing operant behaviorism to bear upon the human condition. The principles of behavioral control that he had outlined in *Behavior of Organisms* using animal experimentation were now applied to the examination of the human organism. Skinner's social philosophy and his agenda for social reform were given their most thorough treatment in a text intended to reach a college audience.

Skinner's text was designed around two main objectives. The first was to provide a summary of the principles of operant behavior and describe the techniques involved in the analysis and control of behavior in organisms. Skinner's description of the operant and of conditioned reflexes, the analysis of environmental contingencies, his behavioral interpretation of emotion, avoidance, anxiety, and other traits in organisms, and the complexities of causal factors in behavior were all adapted directly from *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis* (1938).[147] Skinner's claims for direct application of his principles to *human* research were not, however, supported by actual experimental

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[146] B. F. Skinner, *A Matter of Consequences* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 229.

[147] B. F. Skinner, *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1938).

evidence or sustained formal research into human behavior. Skinner nonetheless moved freely between human and animal examples, reflecting the behaviorist assumption that operant principles were universal. In his courses at Harvard in the late 1940s his "interpretation" (something that he claimed was a "common scientific practice") of human behavior was derived primarily from data collected on pigeons, following his peculiar assumption that, "[t]hey were pretty much alike genetically, and we could give them fairly similar individual histories."[148]

The second major aim of the text was to apply Skinnerian behavioral science to a description of the successive spheres of control that determined the character of the individual in society. This approach entailed an analysis of the internal controls posited in the traditional concept of the self, and the examination of group behavior both on the small and large scales. Group analysis in turn gave way to Skinner's critical appraisal of modern society and its inefficiencies. What, Skinner asked, were the sources of diminished effectiveness of traditional social sanctions in government, law, religion, the economy, and education? How could these systems be reworked by a science of behavioral engineering to increase the pace of human adaptation to changing social and environmental conditions in a new global existence? *Science and Human Behavior* was thus an outline for the construction of a true science of cultural engineering.

In *Walden Two* Skinner had explored the idea of using a small community as a social laboratory, a contrived environment with which to design a system of social engineering. In *Science and Human Behavior*[149] Skinner extended the laboratory concept

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[148] Ibid., 26-27.

[149] Hereafter referred to as SHB.

to encompass an entire culture, a highly complex social environment. Like the individual subject, culture was malleable and capable of being studied, molded and controlled on a grand scale.[150] Why, Skinner asked, should we leave social management to the accidents of conventional religious and legal sanctions that had proven woefully inefficient in optimizing human behavior?[151] Why not place the haphazard experimentation already taking place in education, politics, and industry on a sound scientific footing?

At the heart of SHB was a view of the self at odds with the traditional image of the individual in Western culture as an independent entity possessing mind, will, and agency. Many were loath to relinquish those unique characteristics that set humans apart from the animals.[152] And yet, Skinner observed, even as modern humanity had come to recognize the controls of the many spheres of bureaucracy and technocracy, people tended nevertheless to embrace the illusion of autonomy. Humanity seemed still to be wrestling with contrasting images of the mechanistic and holistic self. As Skinner observed,

> All of this suggests that we are in transition. We have not wholly abandoned the traditional philosophy of human nature; at the same time we are far from adopting a scientific point of view without reservation. We have accepted the assumption of determinism in part; yet we allow our sympathies, our first allegiances, and our personal aspirations to rise to the defense of the traditional view.[153]

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[150] Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, 312, 418.

[151] Ibid., 427.

[152] It is interesting to note here that, in this regard, Skinner likened his cause for a new approach to human nature to that of Darwin and the argument for biological evolution. Darwin had faced opposition to the idea of generative continuity between species, a theory that directly contradicted the traditional religious notions of special creation and species fixity, especially in regard to the origin of humans. In similar fashion, Skinner felt, the behaviorist challenge to humanity uniqueness was opposed by both the intelligentsia and the lay public in modern society. See *Science and Human Behavior*, 6.

[153] Ibid., 9.

In Skinner's arguments we find the self dissolved. Operant behaviorism called for the complete eradication of inner states encompassed in 'mind' or 'personality' that, not being experimentally discernible, had no demonstrable reality. Skinner left no room in his epistemology for an inner self.

> Psychologists like James and Freud observed events within their own bodies called feelings or states of mind which often occurred at just the right time to seem like initiating causes. That kind of misleading information was lacking in the psychophysics of rats and pigeons.[154]

The only model of human nature that allowed for scientific description and control was one where the 'self' was addressed as a unified system of responses, or as a 'common mode of action.'[155] Studying variations in such systems allows for much greater control than if personified in a cultural context. Thus it was the *cultural* ideal of the self, denoting free will, responsibility, creativity and agency, Skinner felt, that needed overhauling if moderns were ever to put human progress on a sound scientific footing.[156] A third aim for SHB was thus the reevaluation of traditional notions of the self in the study of human behavior. As one reviewer described it,

> Skinner's treatment of the self is based on his general scheme of analysis, completely divorced from any previous theories, such as those of Mead, Cooley, Dewey, Sullivan, and others. According to him, the "self is simply a device for representing a functionally unified system of responses."[157]

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[154] Skinner, *A Matter of Consequences*, 279.

[155] Ibid., 284.

[156] Ibid., 255.

[157] Samuel M. Strong, review of *Science and Human Behavior*, by B. F. Skinner, *American Journal of Sociology* 60 (1954-55): 323.

This then was the revelation of a behavioral science of social engineering. Skinner claimed to have found a way to bring 'social forces' under experimental, laboratory control. Harry Prosch in the journal *Ethics* described the text as "a splendid example of the truly vast extent to which a behavioristic approach to human behavior and action can deal with the subject, [...]."[158] W. J. H. Sprott, writing for the *Sociological Review*, extolled the book's scientific merits as "a work of major importance to the psychologist."[159] And with regard to its extreme view of human nature, other critics noted its value as a forum for productive debate on the status of the self in modern society. In the *American Journal of Sociology*, Samuel Strong put it best:

> This is an important book, exceptionally well written, and logically consistent with the basic premise of the unitary nature of science. Many students of society and culture would take violent issue with most of the things that Skinner has to say, but even those who disagree most will find his a stimulating book.[160]

Many indeed took issue with Skinner's depiction of human nature and the self. Charges of anti-humanism were leveled against Skinner's vision and the general rise of technocracy in American culture during the 1950s, a trend that encouraged "groupthink" approaches to business, education, industrial engineering, and human work efficiency. Much like the programs of reinforcement outlined in SHB, the psychology of groupthink asserted that the moral, ethical, and intellectual norms of culture and community should be oriented around the needs of the collective. Some critics feared that such emphasis would detract from the uniqueness, creativity, and spirituality of human nature and

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[158] Ibid.

[159] W. J. H. Sprott, review of *Science and Human Behavior*, by B. F. Skinner, *The Sociological Review* 1 (1953): 101-105, 104.

[160] Strong, review of *Science and Human Behavior*, 323.

culture.[161] These concerns typified the humanist countermovement against behavioral depictions of the individual.

The widely read humanist philosopher and social gadfly, Joseph W. Krutch, for example, was one of the earliest and most outspoken opponents of Skinner and technocratic management. Krutch spent a good portion of his career as poet, musicologist, and philosopher lambasting Skinnerian behaviorism, championing the cause of democracy and individual freedom. His attitude toward behavioral science was much like that of the fictitious philosopher, Castle, in *Walden Two*, who argued for the traditional Western view of humanity -- rational, autonomous, and intuitive -- existing in many respects apart from the trappings of the immediate environment. Like Castle, Krutch rebuffed what he saw as the "fascism" of the Skinnerian self and its denial of human individual integrity.[162]

Krutch's *The Measure of Man* (1953), which contained an extended criticism of *Walden Two*, spoke for many who lamented an age in which man's "ingenuity had outrun his intelligence."[163] For Krutch, modern society had amplified both humanity's potentiality and fallibility to a degree that left it increasingly incapable of managing its own complexities. The advent of global culture, social change, and institutionalized science and technology left humankind struggling to keep control over society to the detriment of basic communal, artistic, and spiritual needs of human beings.[164] Krutch

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[161] William H. Whyte Jr., "The Social Engineers," *Fortune* 46 (1952): 88-91, 108; "Groupthink," *Fortune* 46 (1952): 114-17, 146-47.

[162] Joseph W. Krutch, *The Measure of Man* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1953), 25.

[163] Ibid., 27, 36.

[164] Ibid., 27.

firmly believed that human beings ultimately preferred a less 'successful' and socially mobile existence and would ultimately place more value on free will than the 'good life' promise of an automated society, embodied in the dreams of the behavioral social engineers.[165]

Such rhetoric was echoed in subsequent evaluations of the rise of social technocracy in the latter part of the 1950s. The famous sociologist and radical intellectual C. Wright Mills argued in his classic, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), for example, that scientific expertise had been used to legitimate a view of humankind that emphasized now familiar images of mechanism, control, and manipulation. The religion of scientific method, so much a part of contemporary human relations research, had systematically dehumanized many sectors of human culture.[166] Leaders of the 1960s counterculture such as Theodore Roszak reiterated this appraisal of the American social experience a decade later in his classic, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1968), stating that technocracy had invaded the American consciousness, finding converts in politics, education, entertainment, and urban planning.[167]

Such sentiments were also shared by a new cadre of social scientists who oversaw the rise of psychotherapy in professional psychology in the 1950s. As part of the "third force" in psychology, humanist psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow also challenged Skinner and argued that behaviorism did not help the cause of democracy

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[165] Joseph Krutch, "Men, Apes, and Termites," *Saturday Review* 58 (September 21, 1963): 22-25. See page 24. See also Krutch, "Danger: Utopia Ahead," *Saturday Review* 49 (August 20, 1966): 17-18, 46.

[166] C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 105.

[167] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 6.

or social progress.[168] A new theory of human personality was in order. Rogers, Maslow, and others worked to forge alternative theories that emphasized the virtues of human reason and their power over the strictures of environment.

> [R]esponsible personal choice, which is the most essential element in being a person, which is the core experience in psychotherapy, which exist prior to any scientific endeavor, is an equally prominent fact in our lives. To deny the experience of responsible choice is, to me, as restricted a view as to deny the possibility of behavioral science.[169] -- Carl Rogers

Rogers employed concepts of democracy in his definition of mental health, asserting that the individual was capable of self-actualization in the journey of personal growth and the perpetuation of healthy social traditions. As Rogers put it in his 1956 symposium with Skinner before the American Psychological Association,

> It is in the direction of the "open society," as that term has been defined by [Karl] Popper, where individuals carry responsibility for personal decisions. It is at the opposite pole from his concept of the closed society, of which *Walden Two* would be an example.[170]

It was this kind of personality theory, of which both Rogers and Margaret Mead were adherents, that became the backdrop for some of the key professional debates among behaviorist and humanist psychologists in the 1950s and 60s. In the early fifties, an emerging community of academic psychologists began to challenge the dominance of behavioral science and push an introspective approach to the subconscious mind in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.[171] Behavioral approaches were viewed as inadequate

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[168] Ellen Herman provides an excellent discussion of the disciplinary diversification in postwar psychology in her book, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[169] Carl R. Rogers and B. F. Skinner, "Some Issues Concerning the Control of Human Behavior," *Science* 124 (1956): 1057-66. See page 1064.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 38.

in explaining and treating complex emotional pathologies. The study of emotional development began to take on a prominent place in such areas as child psychology.[172] With Rogers as one of the central figures, the study of emotional development moved away from the analysis of environmental dynamics and the group and toward individual subjective investigations. Rogers argued that as the study of emotion and motivation became more sophisticated, new plans for social programs would supplant the aspirations of the behaviorists.

An account of the exchange between Skinner and Rogers was documented in the pages of *Science* magazine in 1956, and it set the tone for the clashes between humanist and behaviorist thinkers in psychology.[173] Rogers railed against Skinner's uncritical faith in the ability of experimental scientific inquiry to inform us about the end-goal of human society. The practice of social science, as one among many forms of social interaction, involved subjective personal choice at every step. Rogers warned against the implication in Skinnerian social theory that a science of social control was the next logical, and inevitable, step in human social evolution. Short of arguing for a science of social control, Skinner rebutted Rogers by pressing the value of behavioral perspectives to help analyze, predict, and recommend social practices that preserved the whole culture, as well as the individual. Behavioral science, Skinner claimed, got us beyond the inaccuracies of ill-defined human caprice. After all, the goal of behavioral science was to

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[172] Ibid., 43.

[173] See the historical overview of this dialogue in Leonard Krasner, "The Future and the Past in the Behaviorism-Humanism Dialogue," *American Psychologist* 33 (1978): 799-804. For the original debates see B. F. Skinner and Carl Rogers, "Some Issues Concerning the Control of Human Behavior: A Symposium," *Science* 124 (1956): 1057-66.

gain some measure of control over social and individual destiny. His methods were more efficient, Skinner claimed, and were not inherently contrary to liberal democratic values.

Conclusion

In many respects Skinner's career in the postwar decades is the story of American urbanization and social diversification. His utopian thought experiments remind us of the search in American culture for balance between the demands of social progress and the need for the preservation of cultural traditions that define American values, especially those identified with our frontier traditions. Such need to return to nature and simplicity, to a practice of social harmony that aspires to social perfection, is reflected in the social theory of Skinnerian behaviorism.

While *Walden Two* looked to the past to capture the essence of American utopian heritage in social experimentation, it also reflected the aims of social reform that were part of the inheritance of the progressive era in modern America, an age that defined American social science through the confluence of professional growth and the rise of technocratic, urban culture. The system of the factory came to shape the lives of Americans in the manufacturing cults of Fordism and Taylorism, creating a high demand for efficiency and scientific authority in the design of modern mass culture. The scientific philosophy and social aims of progressive social science were carried over into the development of a new behaviorism in the late thirties by members of the second generation of behaviorists, Skinner being among its most prominent representatives.

As Skinner translated his behaviorism into a science of humans and social management, he sought to influence public opinion during a period of intense social change in the postwar years. The legacies of social efficiency, scientism, and traditional American culture were very well represented in a postwar culture struggling to come to grips with new architectures for family, gender, work, community, and the many demands that such an existence made on individuals. True to form, Americans embraced the promise of technology in the search for tools and techniques of social adjustment, but rejected Skinner's vision of community harmony.

The process of technological appropriation by Americans, nevertheless, engendered a new vision of the self that left human nature beholden to the controls of ever changing and diversifying social environments. Little wonder that some social scientists like Skinner chose to embrace and market a mechanical view of humanity in getting a handle on human destiny. As demonstrated in the next chapter, the events of the postwar era caused many to wonder whether Skinner's view of the self might not be preferable to the images of a capricious, despotic, and wasteful humanity that many in the 1960s and early 70s thought spelled the end of human civilization.

CHAPTER THREE

HUMAN ENGINEERING IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS AND BEYOND

I knew, as all teachers know, that education was inadequately supported. That was perhaps not its own fault, but its outmoded techniques certainly were. Furthermore, education was completely bewildered as to its place in the world of the future.

...Now, fresh from my experience at Walden Two, I saw that this could not go on. But I also saw that educators themselves could not save the situation. The causes were too deep, too remote. They involved the whole structure of society. What was needed was a new conception of man, compatible with our scientific knowledge, which would lead to a philosophy of education bearing some relation to educational practices. But to achieve this, education would have to abandon the technical limitations which it had imposed upon itself and step forth into a broader sphere of human engineering. Nothing short of the complete revision of a culture would suffice.

T. E. Frazier, in Skinner, *Walden Two* (1948)[1]

[I]t could maximize the genetic endowment of each student; it could make him as skillful, competent, and informed as possible; it could build the greatest diversity of interests; it could lead him to make the greatest possible contribution to the survival and development of his culture.

B. F. Skinner, *Technology of Teaching* (1968)[2]

B. F. Skinner, the public scientist, enjoyed considerable notoriety from his technological and literary promotion of social efficiency in the 1940s and 50s, especially with regard to teaching and education reform in later years. His initial suggestions for large-scale social experimentation, however, met with little support among intellectual and popular audiences. Skinner was demonized in the press by several humanist scientists and philosophers. This was the kind of megalomania and perverted science, they argued, that had contributed to the rise of the Nazi and Communist regimes. The potential of his social inventions had been lost, Skinner concluded, on Americans who focused on the sterile, dehumanizing connotations of the Baby Box and *Walden Two*.

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[1] B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1948), 312.

[2] B. F. Skinner, *The Technology of Teaching* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), 91.

What Skinner characterized as straightforward failures in marketing his ideas and technologies is, however, more readily explained by the effects of the Second World War and the Cold War on the confidence of Americans in their national identity. While accepting increased technology and systemization into the home and the workplace, postwar Americans were not open to the level of social regimentation imagined in a Skinnerian technocratic utopia. The late 1940s and early 1950s in America were characterized by a political emphasis on containment and security, and a cultural closing of the ranks driven by the fear of renewed economic and social instability. Conservative and standardized portrayals of family and community life proliferated in the media during the opening decade of the Cold War. Although these images of the 'good life' did not accurately reflect the lives of most Americans, suspicions about unconventional and radical social views were nonetheless part of the phenomena of McCarthyism and the outward standardization of suburban culture.

In the early 1960s, younger Americans especially became increasingly dissatisfied with the trappings of modern mass culture, as well as the injustices of sexual and racial discrimination. Protest movements among a new generation of social critics fueled high-profile debates about the future of America and the fate of humanity. These critics saw an America that had yet to address institutionalized racism, pollution, poverty, war, urban strife, and dehumanizing bureaucracy. This period of protest and debate bred open discussion of social reform among politicians, public intellectuals, counterculture activists and scientists.

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 60s, Skinner's technologies and social theories, and his image of the future self, were again hotly debated. In the present

chapter I will examine this third period of Skinner's career when he enjoyed greater success at promoting technologies of behavioral modification, and stirring up controversy about his social theories in the late 1960s and early 70s. Skinner modified his presentation of educational technology and utopian theory in the 1960s to appeal to Americans concerned about such issues as the Vietnam War and environmental pollution, and who were calling for reforms in education and civil rights legislation. Many were also enthusiastic about exploring societal alternatives.

Like other well-known radicals who had publicly challenged the status quo, Skinner again offered up *Walden Two* as a plausible vision of what humanity and community could become with proper engineering. He promoted the potential of experimental communities in helping Americans to learn how to reinvent society. Without question, Skinner's description of the Walden Two community, with its attention to behavior modification and human efficiency, evoked for many the calculated dehumanization of technocracy and laboratory science. Curiously, however, many of Skinner's young communitarian readers of *Walden Two* in the 1960s selectively appropriated its experimental themes and translated them into a general, non-technocratic call for the exploration of social alternatives. Its setting, after all, evoked many of the ideals of community cohesion, simplicity, personal discovery, and smallness of living that were part of the counterculture mandate to get humankind physically and spiritually 'back to the garden.' In the 1960s *Walden Two* thus served as an important propaganda tool for Skinner in recasting behaviorism as a humanistic science of social exploration, one that de-emphasized burgeoning technocracy and instead upheld a return to simplicity and humanity.

Most significant for Skinner's public career in the 1960s, however, was his rising fame as the acknowledged leader of a revolution in teaching technology and learning theory. This aspect of his career merits special examination, since it is the clearest example of the public appropriation of Skinnerian behavioral technology. Skinner believed that, short of starting experimental communities for research, the best hope for the design of better human 'natures' was the laboratory of the classroom. An examination of how Skinner translated the utopian ideals in *Walden Two* into a strategy for restructuring education theory will show the considerable influence of Skinner's behavioral perspective on American education. It will also illustrate how a vision of the programmable self was appropriated by administrators and industrialists involved in American public education. If Skinner's techniques of behavioral modification could be applied, as he claimed, to virtually any aspect of human learning, intellect, or mode of creativity, then adaptation to social change could be quickened and enhanced. American schools could use teaching technology, Skinner would claim, to respond quickly to an alleged education "crisis" in the late 1950s. Public debates on the efficiency of American education intensified during this period following the launch of the Russian satellite, Sputnik.

Daniel Bjork, E. A. Vargas, and Julie S. Vargas have discussed Skinner's attempts to bring teaching technology to the public as a venue of social reform.[3] His aspirations ultimately were thwarted, Bjork explains, by what Skinner believed was his own persistent inability to control the commercial designs on his inventions. Skinner eventually concluded that business interests had gained too much control over the

[3] See Daniel Bjork's chapter on Skinnerian educational technology in *B. F. Skinner: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 167-90.

'experimental' space of the classroom and were bent on exploiting teaching machines as an educational commodity.[4] Bjork also notes Skinner's general dislike of education professionals who seemed more interested in perpetuating traditional administrative policies than exploring innovations from science.[5] A teaching machine revolution in education did not materialize, and Skinner's own methods were never extensively used in subsequent projects of programmed instruction.

There is ample evidence to suggest, however, that a revolution in *programmed instruction*, inspired directly by Skinner's innovations, did occur in the 1960s and 70s, and that it continues to exert influence even today.[6] In order to frame this revolution historically, I will again invoke the American cultural themes of scientific management and efficiency and their transformation of American industrial management. The philosophy of Scientific Management, as I have argued, transcended Taylor the individual in the decades after 1915. In much the same way, Skinner's basic management approach to the processes of learning has been applied subsequently to innumerable settings in schools, government and military institutions, and corporate

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[4] Ibid., 182.

[5] In particular, Bjork recounts Skinner's interaction with James B. Conant, former president of Harvard (where Skinner was a faculty member), who was well known for his highly publicized report on American education, *The American High School Today: A First Report to Interested Citizens* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959), published just after the launch of Sputnik. Skinner found Conant to be a typical policy maker, an official who preferred to reconstitute existing systems of administration instead of experimenting with radical change.

[6] While Daniel Bjork acknowledges Skinner's influence in programmed instruction, he does not elaborate on this point. A behaviorologist and educational psychologist, respectively, E. A. Vargas and Julie S. Vargas are themselves enthusiasts of programmed instruction and have made a case for Skinner's revolutionary status. They contend that Skinner's theories of education have yet to be fully tapped. These claims seem to me to be historically uncritical. See their article, "B. F. Skinner and the Origins of Programmed Instruction," in *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, ed. Laurence Smith and William R. Woodward (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 237-53, especially page 251.

training programs since the 1960s. Breaking down information into manageable parts that can then be quickly and efficiently re-programmed into human machines, is a strategy that has been developed extensively. The ability to program humans for any industrial, social, or military contingency has been a powerful idea among industrialists long since indoctrinated into the principles of Scientific Management.

As cultural historian Martha Banta has observed in her studies of language and iconography in literary journals and magazines, Taylor-style system building as a cultural template was well established in the national culture in the early twentieth-century.[7] Americans in the twentieth century, Banta argues, became obsessed with organization and systematization. This made Taylor's rise to public notoriety predictable. Taylor, like Skinner in the postwar era, promised simple methods for solving social problems, a promise that Americans have always found especially appealing. This love of system building and controlling human behavior played no small role in establishing behavioral perspectives on humanity in the social sciences at the turn of the century. System theory, as Banta noted, also came to exert considerable influence on social discourse about everyday living. The desire for systems has remained a foundational component not only of social administration theory but also of the very image of modern humanity. The self as a lawful system of behavioral matrices open to environmental manipulation was an image, as Skinner understood, that had already made inroads into many areas of American cultural life. Skinner's rise to fame is understandable in light of the American obsession with order and system, and it helps explain why Americans found his technologies and depictions of the self so fascinating.

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[7] Martha Banta, *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

In my analysis of *Walden Two*, technologies of teaching, and Skinner's social manifesto, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, published in 1971, I demonstrate how Skinner capitalized on public awareness of the global nature of social and environmental problems associated with urban living in the 1960s and 70s.[8] In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Skinner declared that a failure to rework traditional ideals of human individuality and community would spell the end of civilization. Social engineering was now a matter of human survival. A comparison of the objections to Skinnerian social theory during the 1950s Cold War and the era of the counterculture in the 1960s and 70s also reveals why it was such a controversial subject. It tapped into some of the core dilemmas of American national identity in postwar America about the place and face of the self. These controversies solidified Skinner's public reputation by the early 1970s, however, as one of the most influential scientific minds of the twentieth century, and the author of what a reviewer for *Psychology Today* called the most "controversial and terrifying book" of 1971.[9]

Indeed, as Daniel Bjork also has argued, Skinner's book was controversial because of its timeliness and its challenge to democratic and individualist values. The proper balance between individual autonomy and social management, Bjork observed, was debated among American "traditionalists" and "liberators" in the first half of the nineteenth century.[10] Those in the traditionalist camp believed that individual caprice needed to be controlled by the institutions of church and government, while liberators felt

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[8] Both of these books are hereafter referred to as WT and BFD where appropriate.

[9] Richard Rubenstein, review of *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, by B. F. Skinner, *Psychology Today* 6 (1971): 30-31, 95-97. See page 30.

that unrestrained individual freedom was essential to moral and social harmony. This debate has since played out in a number of different political arenas.

While I agree with Bjork that the philosophical virtues of freedom and human dignity remained strong despite Skinner's challenge, I interpret the strong negative reaction to *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* in a slightly different, but not incompatible, way. The humanist intellectuals and scientists who lambasted Skinner undoubtedly saw his book as a variation on nineteenth-century traditionalism, one that needed to be quashed. But the national phenomenon that was BFD cannot adequately be characterized as an intellectual debate that reflected broad American opinion. To be sure, many Americans saw the same basic threat to freedom and democracy in BFD as the academics. I think it productive, however, to analyze reactions to BFD in light of other trends in American culture that are only partly addressed in Bjork's discussion. My treatment examines how Americans learned to live with the tension between mechanistic and holistic visions of the self. This moves us beyond Bjork's straightforward pronouncement of victory for liberators over the forces of technocracy.[11] As a description of American cultural and political ideology it rings true. But it does not entirely account for the *embrace* of technocracy in postwar America that, as Bjork acknowledges, Skinner tapped into.[12]

Both mechanistic and holistic images of the self continued to be invoked by Americans in different social and industrial contexts. My presentation of the practical

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[10] Bjork, *Skinner*, 206-08.

[11] Ibid., 207.

[12] Ibid., 212-13.

realities of these attempts to combine democracy and technocracy, while by no means comprehensive, is intended nevertheless to add to Bjork's discussion of Skinner's audiences and critics. In contrasting these images of the self and their cultural sources I will also provide further explanation of what Alexandra Rutherford has described as Skinner's many public images ranging, as she says, from "educational revolutionary, to utopian, to scientific despot and totalitarian."[13] In what she has termed the "complex and historically unique" era of 1960s America, some saw Skinner as a humanist progressive while others vehemently dismissed his theories as the stuff of Orwellian nightmares.[14] In invoking the tension between the humanistic desire for individual dignity and the technocratic aim of harmonious social organization that persisted throughout twentieth-century political thought and public culture, I will delineate Skinner's appropriation by public constituencies that each held different agendas for the self. This will, I believe, elucidate Rutherford's characterization of Skinnerian social philosophy as "at once unbearably tantalizing and devastatingly empty."[15]

In chronicling the third phase of Skinner's public career as a social critic and purveyor of behavioral technology, I shall begin by discussing the rise in popularity of *Walden Two* during the late 1950s and early 60s. It will again be explored as a foil for discussing contemporary social issues in postwar America. In the 1960s the novel was being read by a new generation of young adults who interpreted its message differently than those who encountered it in the immediate postwar years. Rejecting mass society

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[13] Alexandra Rutherford, "B. F. Skinner's Technology of Behavior in American Life: From Consumer Culture to Counterculture," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 39, no. 1 (Winter, 2003): 1-23. See page 19.

[14] Ibid., 18.

[15] Ibid.

and consumer culture, a new generation of readers saw a humanistic vision of society that combined the idea of engineered human potential with the individualist virtues of simplicity and a connection to nature that were reminiscent of earlier nineteenth-century experiments in utopian social harmony.[16] In some cases the novel served as guide for real-world experiments in alternative living.

Recasting Skinnerian Social Technology in the 1960s

Back in 1948 when Skinner first published *Walden Two*, he had high hopes that would be received favorably. His reputation as a scientist and budding philosopher already had attracted attention the previous year from Time Incorporated which offered him a recurring column in a new magazine on contemporary art, literature, philosophy, theology, and science, called the "Philosopher's Notebook." The magazine would be

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[16] Skinner, I argue, recognized the appeal and fascination that *Walden Two*, with its call to the simple life and small-scale community living, would have for a new generation of Americans who had begun to reject mass culture and become more aware of social and environmental problems. In this sense, many appropriated Skinner's utopian vision as a critique of modern life similar to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), and E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: Economics As if People Mattered* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). *Walden Two* also served as a manual of sorts for those seeking what C. Wright Mills had called a return to 'membership' in society, and a reinvigoration of basic community functions. Skinner's model seemed to provide for a form of democratic social control where group activity was mediated by the leadership of social planners. For more on the use of these types of techniques by humanist and liberal democratic social scientists, see William Graebner, *The Engineering of Consent: Democracy and Authority in Twentieth Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

Skinner's social theory thus found a place in the counterculture among communalists and 'diggers' in the 1960s and 70s who set off in search of alternatives to modern living. The Twin Oaks farm which was established in 1970 outside Louisa, Virginia, for example, initially used Skinner's novel as the model. For more on the history of the commune movements in the 1960s and 70s, see Keith Melville's *Communes in the Counterculture* (New York: Morrow, 1972). For an in depth look at the Twin Oaks experiment, see Ingrid Komar's *Living the Dream: A Documentary Study of the Twin Oaks Community, Communal Societies and Utopian Studies Book Series*, vol. 1 (Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1983) and Kathleen Kinkade's *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1973).

dedicated to discussions on "the problems of our time," and the first of Skinner's columns was to be on the topic of free will.[17] This was undoubtedly an encouraging sign of public interest to Skinner as he began to piece together *Walden Two*. Indeed, Skinner and his editors felt that the novel might fit in well with other controversial books on the economic, political and social conditions that had led to the Second World War.[18] As one editor observed in a review of the manuscript for *Walden Two*, "the average utopian novel [usually] fails to sell because of the burden of ideas." And yet,

> By and large, however, successful utopian novels appeal to a strong dissatisfaction with the present and encourage a hope for the future. Both LOOKING BACKWARD and NEWS FROM NOWHERE came at a time when certain shortcomings of monopoly capitalism were becoming apparent to large numbers of people. ... Many social scientists have argued that our knowledge of human behavior is now adequate to serve as a basis for the good life, but Skinner, so far as I know, is the first person to try to imagine what would happen. His arguments, it almost goes without saying, are not perfectly convincing, but he makes a good enough case to be interesting.[19]

Publishers at Macmillan predicted that *Walden Two* would be a provocative best seller.[20] It did see support among a small number of enthusiasts like the young Yale

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[17] Papers of B. F. Skinner. Correspondence ca. 1928-1979. Executive offices of Time Incorporated to Skinner. 10 October 1947, Box 1, Folder 4. [HUGFP 60.10]. Harvard University Archives. Cambridge, MA. Item from these folders are hereafter referred to as HUGFP 60.10.

[18] Some of the more important works that fall into this category are by prominent intellectuals and social scientists of the day such as Charles Wright Mills, Peter Drucker and Erich Fromm, all of whom explored the problems of the postwar economic and social environment. See for example Mills' *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948) for a discussion of labor issues and industry. See also the classic by Peter Drucker, *The New Society: The Anatomy of the Industrial Order* (New York: Harper, 1949). For criticism of American society, consult Erich Fromm's *Man For Himself: An Inquiry Into the Psychology of Ethics* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications Inc., 1947).

[19] Editorial comments on Skinner's manuscript, "The Sun Is But a Morning Star," 3-4. Papers of B. F. Skinner. Correspondence ca. 1928-1979. n. d. [HUGFP 60.10]. Box 1. Folder 1. Harvard University Archives. Cambridge, MA. Items in these folders hereafter referred to as HUGFP 60.10.

[20] There were early indications from the initial reviews in the *New York Times* that *Walden Two* would be regarded as an important book, since, as Macmillan editors noted, it received early recognition by the media and was proving controversial. Papers of B. F. Skinner. Correspondence and Documents, ca. 1948-1979. Macmillan to Skinner, 11 June 1948, Box 1. [HUGFP 60.15]. Harvard University Archives.

student, and future social psychologist, Arthur Gladstone, who attempted to organize communities based on Skinner's ideas. On the whole, however, the novel did not garner a wide initial readership. It inspired virulent responses from humanists and philosophers because of its rejection of classic human virtues. As one of Skinner's old classmates from Hamilton College, the artist Alf Evers, observed, the novel challenged fundamental tenets of individual identity and nationalist politics with such bald directness that it would certainly be vilified.

> I can see fiery crosses burning on the outskirts [*sic*] of Walden Two. I can see Mr. Hearst turning on the thunder from San Simeon, and the Legionnaires and other respectable groups turning out to picket and harass, until the younger set feels impelled to indulge in arson and murder. Pulpits would be pounded, Mr. Kaltenborn and Fulton Lewis would get to work. If the attorney general couldn't find the proper statute, Congress would eagerly provide one. Behavioural engineering would be turned against Walden Two on a nation wide scale. The existence of the colony would be too great a threat to the powers that be, to be ignored, and all the techniques of influencing behaviour would be at their command.[21]

Decades later, however, *Walden Two* would be recognized as one of the most influential literary explorations of modern social and technological utopianism. In the decades after its initial publication it slowly developed a following among younger readers and communalists. Because of its timeliness for the 1960s, the book served as a sounding board for discussions among prominent humanist intellectuals, scientists, psychologists, and the occasional politician, about social technology and the philosophical implications of a behavioristic approach to the self.[22] In his 1976 survey of

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Cambridge, MA. Items in these folders hereafter referred to as HUGFP 60.15. Skinner's early assessment of the book's readership potential as a best seller comes from his own account in the third volume of his autobiography, *A Matter of Consequences* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 44.

[21] Alf Evers to Skinner, 26 June 1948, HUGFP 60.15, Box 1, 1948-1950.

[22] Harold Berger made this claim for *Walden Two* in his 1976 literary study, *Science Fiction and the New Dark Age* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1976), 53, 55. Other surveys of

postwar dystopian science fiction, where world war, environmental devastation, and overpopulation were often central topics, Harold Berger described WT in the most telling terms as "more nearly a sociological dialogue with connecting narration than a work of fiction."[23] To a certain extent this was true of all dystopian science fiction in the twentieth century according to Berger. George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Frederick Pohl, Anthony Burgess and others had simply put contemporary trends in technocracy to work in foretelling the future. "They are the fellows who had written about this [social breakdown], who had said this could happen, this -- dystopia --," declared Berger, "and they were right."[24] Skinner's was a straightforward appraisal of real social trends, albeit with no significant literary merit. Still, Berger acknowledged the tremendous influence of *Walden Two*.

> The impact of Skinner's book is now history. No modern utopist vision has stimulated a greater reaction than Skinner's, and that reaction has been largely and heatedly negative. Macmillan's 1966 paperback printing acknowledges on its back cover that Skinner's "modern utopia has been a center of raging controversy ever since its publication in 1948."[25]

Skinner had written a novel that he believed would appeal to the educated layman.[26] It was initially critiqued, however, by intellectuals with ties to academia. The novel also piqued the interest of fellow public intellectuals who acknowledged Skinner's newfound celebrity. It was clear to them that Skinner was not engaging in literary flights

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utopian literature from this period make similar claims for the influence of *Walden Two*. See Charles J. Erasmus, *Utopian Experiments Past and Future* (New York: Free Press, 1977); Peyton E. Richter, ed., *Utopia/Dystopia* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1975).

[23] Berger, *Science Fiction and the New Dark Age*, 52.

[24] Ibid., xi.

[25] Ibid., 53.

[26] Skinner, *Consequences*, 44.

of fancy or cultural satire. *Walden Two* was Skinner's first (but not last) social scientific manifesto.[27] In his article for the *Philosophical Review* in 1949 entitled, "The Scientist as Philosopher King," for example, the philosopher Donald C. Williams observed that social scientists such as Skinner had recently laid claim to long-sought public authority.

> We have often been told of late that man will end himself unless the social scientists bring our understanding of human nature abreast of the widely careering physical sciences and lays hands on the reins of history. In *Walden Two*, Professor Burrhus Frederick Skinner, an illustrious psychologist and man of parts, speculative and humane, accepts the challenge and gives in the dress of utopian fiction a sanguine account of the brave new world which his profession can provide. The scientific samurai could not put their case in the hands of a more able and winning advocate, and if he loses it, it is lost indeed.[28]

What plans indeed did such "scientific samurai" (a phrase borrowed by Williams from H. G. Wells) like Skinner have in mind for social progress and human survival, and what could this mean for the modern understanding of human nature? The novel sparked a mixture of fascination and revulsion among Williams's intellectual contemporaries.

Skinner's audience, as described in the previous chapter, was captivated by the promise of social harmony but also anxious about scientifically engineered social reform.[29] One of the most damning and widely read responses to *Walden Two* came from

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[27] See Donald C. Williams' discussion of *Walden Two* and Skinner's social philosophy in his extended article for the *Philosophical Review* entitled, "The Social Scientist As Philosopher and King," 58 (1949): 345-59.

[28] Ibid., 345.

[29] Most of the more studied commentaries and reviews by American liberal and humanist intellectuals were highly dubious of behavioral engineering and warned of its totalitarian and even fascist characteristics. For a mainstream popular review, see the scathing opinions in the *Life* magazine article, "The Newest Utopia Is A Slander on Some Old Notions of the Good Life," 24 (June 28, 1948): 24, 38. Reviews in intellectually oriented journals expressed similar sentiment. See John K. Jessup, "Utopian Bulletin," *Fortune* 44 (1948): 191-195; G. Negley and J. M. Patrick, *The Quest for Utopia: An Anthology of Imaginary Societies* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952); Joseph W. Krutch, *The Measure of Man* (New York: The Bobbs-Merril Co. Inc., 1953); Andrew Hacker, "Dostoevsky's Disciples: Man and Sheep in Political Theory," *Journal of Politics* 17 (1955): 590-608.

a reviewer for *Life* magazine who branded Skinner's protagonist a tyrant and an advocate of the kind of dystopian nightmare satirized in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), with its images of screaming babies, electrocuted and terrorized, conditioned to effect desired behavior.[30]

> [T]he menace of the mechanical baby tender is as nothing compared to the menace of books like *Walden Two*. For Dr. Skinner's utopia is a triumph of "cultural engineering" and "behavioral engineering" where the conditioned reflex is king...Once they are trained, the inhabitants of Walden Two have "freedom." But it is the freedom of those Pavlovian dogs which are free to foam at the mouth whenever the "dinner" bell invites them to a nonforthcoming meal. The very possibility of random personal choice has been eliminated from Dr. Skinner's world by a hierarchy which alone has the right to experiment.[31]

The image of the self as presented by Frazier struck many scientists and intellectuals as a gross oversimplification of human nature.[32] Most disturbing of all was the fact that this utopia had been offered up by a prominent Harvard psychologist as a reasonable prospect and possible alternative to modern industrialized society. As one contemporary survey of utopian literature observed in 1952,

> [W]hile it was to be expected that sooner or later the principle of psychological conditioning would be made the basis of a serious construction of utopia ...not even the effective satire of Huxley is adequate preparation for the shocking horror of the idea when positively presented. Of all the dictatorships espoused by utopists, this is the most profound, and incipient dictators might well find in this utopia a guidebook of political practice.[33]

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[30] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1932).

Part of Huxley's intent in this dystopian tale of the future, grounded in the principles of behavioral control in human society, was to illustrate the arrogance of social scientists in presuming to prescribe social ethics and values on the basis of professional expertise and scientific philosophy/methodology. The result of such arrogance, as his readers later saw at the end of the 1930s, was totalitarian oppression.

[31] "Newest Utopia," *Life*, 38.

[32] This was the general sentiment of the review in *Life* magazine. Also see the comments of Donald C. Williams in note 24 above.

[33] Negley, *Quest*, 589.

Many critics were also disturbed by what seemed to be Skinner's almost obsessive fascination with *control.* How was this any different from the dehumanizing techniques of psychological conditioning that Aldous Huxley had warned against? Skinner was often at pains to make clear the crucial distinctions between the classical conditioning techniques in Pavlovian and Watsonian behaviorism, viciously satirized by Huxley, and what was in Skinner's view a fundamentally different, non-aversive approach to shaping behavior.[34]

> [T]he difference between *Brave New World* and *Walden Two*, aside from the fact that the former is a satire, was the difference between a concern for feelings and a concern for action. Huxley was fascinated by feelings....Perhaps the current lack of interest [in exploring a Walden Two] is explained by the fact that people who are devoted to feelings avoid hearing feelings ridiculed.[35]

Operant conditioning, Skinner stressed, emphasized positive reinforcement. Speaking in the voice of Frazier years later at Columbia University about renewed interest in Walden Two in the 1960s, Skinner made further distinctions,

> Frazier -- "In *Brave New World*, published in the early 30s, you find a commitment to a few selected techniques of behavioral control. ... The behavioral techniques are reducible mainly to the Pavlovian conditioning of attitudes and to the allaying of all needs and desires through massive gratification...Fordian productivity was to make most of it possible and the rest could be achieved by a reversal of sexual conventions which Huxley borrowed from the Marquis de Sade. ... [yet] [h]e is still talking about the engineering of attitudes (with subliminal perceptions added as a

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[34] Robert Epstein, ed., *Notebooks, B. F. Skinner* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1980), 64. See also B. F. Skinner, "Walden Two Revisited." MSS and Near Print Items, Lecture Notes and Manuscripts. 4 January 1960. HUGFP 60.50. Box 1. Folder 1. B. F. Skinner papers. Harvard University Archives. Cambridge, MA. Items in these folders hereafter referred to as HUGFP 60.50. From a lecture given at Teacher's College, Columbia University in 1960.

[35] Epstein, *Notebooks*, 64.

new threat) and other techniques of inculcating acceptance on the part of the ruthlessly governed."[36]

The backlash that attended *Walden Two*'s publication in the late 1940s, as I have argued, had little to do with the theoretical and technical nuances of behavioral psychology. Rather, the problem lay with what appeared to be Skinner's wholesale indictment of traditional American cultural virtues. Particularly insidious was his method of engineering consent through an ostensibly participatory system of community government in the Walden Two community. Skinner might have removed the need for punishment and coercion in the conditioning of behavior, but his plan still required the sacrifice of personal autonomy.

The novel struck at the very core of what the political scientist Andrew Hacker characterized in a 1955 essay for the *Journal of Politics* as a new period of anxiety about the erosion of the religious, philosophical, and political underpinnings of human autonomy. "In these days of 'interdisciplinary' study," Hacker observed, "it is often difficult to remember that liberal theory is a political theory." Indeed, the social sciences -- psychology, sociology, and anthropology -- had made plain the realization that fundamentally, "the individual's behavior may be governed by the fact he is reared in a culture which is based on the *kula* ritual; or because he lives in matrilineal consangual groups; or by reason of his libido."[37] Social science, it seemed, had laid bare the fallacy of the autonomous individual with overwhelming evidence. Skinner's utopia, Hacker observed, confirmed a new social reality. In a world of myriad systems, "the individual

[36] Skinner, "WT Revisited," 2.

[37] Hacker, "Dostoyevski's Disciples," 593.

is forever being buffeted about by external pressures -- pressures which originate elsewhere than from within himself."

Skinner had simply written about what the liberal cognoscenti, those like Joseph Wood Krutch, David Riesman, and Erich Fromm, had feared might be true -- that this "selection mechanism," the inviolate human capacity to make educated choices among myriad influences and pressures, was in the end an illusion.[38] Modern social science, Hacker thought, had precipitated a new political reality, one where society was divided between managers and the profligate masses in need of conditioning. If autonomy lay anywhere, it was with the political and scientific elite, those who controlled the society and the place of the individual in it.

> Conceptions such as "consent," "obedience," "obligation," "leadership," "public opinion," "representative government," "majority rule," and even "freedom" must take on new meanings. The traditional definitions which spring from liberal theory may perhaps still hold true for those who plan the conditioning of others. But they are grossly malapropos for those whose minds are on the receiving end. And this latter group contains the vast majority of us.[39]

This message from Skinner about the death of autonomous man was not new. Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor" character in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1912) and Huxley's "World Controllers" in *Brave New World* (1932) had said the same thing about the fate of the individual in the modern age. What emerged from reading Skinner's utopian novel, however, was a recognition that at least a portion of social authority and control in designing cultures, was now in the hands of scientific experts. For Huxley, this

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[38] Ibid., 591-92.

[39] Ibid., 613.

had been a vision of things to come. In the 1950s Skinner heralded the arrival of this political reality. As Hacker observed,

> A discussion in terms of a realistic political theory should grant that there are important differences between a consciously manipulative conditioning process and one that is left to the whims of cultural development and impersonal forces.[40][...] Dostoyevski, Huxley, and Skinner have presented us with fictional fantasies. It ought well to be asked how they can help us in understanding our own world. ...[W]hat must concern political scientists is the efforts at conditioning which exist in our own society.[41]

Hacker suggested that Americans study the techniques employed by the Soviet Union, the Nazis, communist China, and Korean prison camps to remind themselves of the dangers of abusive conditioning. The decay of social, religious, and political institutions often had been associated with a scientific deconstruction and secularization of culture.[42] Secular humanism, social experimentation, and oppressive bureaucracy were closely associated with totalitarian communist, socialist, and fascist experiments. A closer look at our own systems of conditioning at the national and local level was thus in order. What could we learn from a so-called "company town" where local politics and public opinion were geared toward corporate interests?[43] As I have shown previously, Skinner had done such analyses in his behavioral interpretations of political, social, and religious institutions. His conclusions about the shortcomings of democracy, and the

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[40] Ibid., 608.

[41] Ibid., 609.

[42] One of the best explorations of these themes is contained in the *Science of Culture* series published under the supervision of the sociologist, Ruth N. Anshen, in the late 1940s. For a discussion of scientific secularization in modern America see volume four, *Our Emergent Civilization* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947).

[43] Hacker, "Dostoyevski's Disciples," 610.

need for scientific management, were reflections of larger trends in American bureaucracy and technocracy.

Skinner, of course, had always understood the difference between the conditioned matrices born of "cultural development" and the concerted effort to scientifically engineer efficient cultural spaces. His aims in the second half of his career were in line with what Hacker and many others seemed to be asking for. He tried to make good on his promise to provide guidance.

Walden Two appeared at a time when, as the American cultural historian Warren Susman has explained, world events fueled a growing sense of bewilderment and anxiety among Americans about the fate of modern civilization, as well as a palpable cynicism with regard to human nature.[44] The magnitude of human violence perpetuated by military and industrial technology, the social excesses that had brought about a global economic depression, the political extremism that had produced fascism, and the horrors of world war and nuclear devastation had all contributed to a new set of fears, especially among young Americans, about the fate of humanity in the modern age. Gallup polls in the 1950s reflected these sentiments. In 1948, 56% of Americans ranked the Cold War, Russian insurgency, and the threat of another war as the top policy issues. A 1955 poll indicated that 64% of Americans believed that a major war with Russia was likely. Another in 1958 noted that 54% of Americans felt that direct government action would

[44] Susman argues for a distinct postwar culture in his article, "Did Success Spoil the United States?: Dual Representations in Postwar America," in the seminal collection of essays on postwar American culture, *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War*, ed. Lary May (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 19-37.

be needed to stabilize the economy. And a 1960 poll showed that 50% of Americans believed that war with Russia was inevitable.[45]

Skinner was encouraged by the intellectual furor that his novel had created in light of what clearly were heightened public fears about the potential for another world conflict and about the fate of humanity. In his 1960 address to the Fund for the Republic, Skinner recalled that his ruminations about the book, and its acute relevance to current social dilemmas, in the first two years after it was published had converted him into "a thoroughgoing Frazierian."[46] He also found the marginal but growing public interest in experimental communities inspiring. Skinner was confident that, given such cultural anxieties, the seeds of discontent within a mass technocratic society would persist and eventually come to a head. He need only wait for the revolution. As he was fond of saying years later, a new vision of the self and the desire for a science of culture, both of which were embodied in *Walden Two*, was a science 'fantasy' that, bit by bit, slowly made its way into reality.[47]

With the encouragement of friends and the occasional letter from excited readers, Skinner continued to draw up plans for the construction of experimental communities in the 1950s and 60s. He collected ideas for another utopian novel about the practical aspects of maintaining such a community.[48] Although it never materialized, Skinner

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[45] Statistics taken from the collected abstracts in George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 1-3 (New York: Random House, 1972). From polls taken on April 19, 1948, February 12, 1955, April 20, 1958, and June 19, 1960.

[46] B. F. Skinner, "Walden Two Revisited." A Lecture for the Fund for the Republic, 1 April 1960, HUGFP 60.50, Folder B7c.

[47] Epstein, *Notebooks*, 94.

[48] Ibid., 77-78.

continued to engage in personal experiments with behaviorally designed living. While on sabbatical leave in 1955 Skinner worked on daily personal schedules of reinforcement that helped him make more efficient use of his work and leisure time, aspects of communal life that he discussed in *Walden Two.*

Skinner doggedly promoted his vision of programmable humanity, and his behavioral technologies, in mainstream culture through his articles and public lectures, thereby advancing his social vision. In 1953 he fulfilled his agreement with the Macmillan publishing company to produce a textbook in psychology, *Science and Human Behavior*, which was in many ways an extension of his utopian musings in *Walden Two. Science and Human Behavior* became one of Skinner's best selling books, receiving enthusiastic reviews and breaking sales records in the textbook division at Macmillan. One of the most important aspects of his comprehensive plan for social reform covered in the book was the reform of education. In 1959 alone Skinner recalled giving over fifty public lectures on programmed instruction.[49] Technologies of teaching became central to the practical implementation of Skinner's social vision.

The Behavioral Revolution in American Education

Skinner's rise to full prominence as a public intellectual and scientific expert came with his endorsement of education reform in the early 1960s. The spread of programmed learning concepts and technologies, more than either the baby tender or the Pigeon Project, was a clear testament to the social potential of behavioral science. In no

[49] Skinner, *Consequences*, 206.

other area of Skinner's work was the symbol of programmable humanity more explicit than in his teaching technology of the late 1950s and early 60s.

For Skinner, teaching was a matter of programming the human machine to maximize its learning potential. In many ways teaching technology and programmed instruction were the culmination of his research on how organisms -- rats, pigeons, and people -- were fundamentally shaped by their environment. As recounted in a 1960 *Fortune* magazine article entitled "Can Pigeons Be Taught like People?," "a basic tenet of behaviorism [namely] that behavior patterns, such as learning, are essentially the same for all intelligent species. So," as was said of Skinner's early work at Harvard, "Skinner adapted his pigeon-training techniques to his own students...Skinner's boys and girls proved easier to condition than pigeons. Evidently most human beings set great store on being right and are willing to work for a pat on the back."[50]

Skinner's research had convinced him that human nature, like that of all animals, had been fundamentally shaped by environmental contingencies in the evolutionary process. Each activity of the organism emerged as a consequence of the topography of environmental reinforcement. This perspective, Skinner argued, also applied to the behavior (including thinking, acting, and communicating) of learning. For Skinner it was pointless to attempt unscientific education programs that typically were based on the analysis of current institutional practices. The study of human behavior in the classroom, he argued, would provide more than enough information about the learning potential of students and how best to optimize it.[51]

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[50] George A. W. Boehm, "Can People Be Taught Like Pigeons?," *Fortune* 62 (October, 1960): 176-179, 265-266. See page 178.

[51] Skinner, "Why We Need Teaching Machines," 37.

> The fact remains that more than half a century of the self-conscious examination of instructional processes had worked only moderate changes in educational practices. The laboratory study of learning provided the confidence, if not all the knowledge, needed for a successful instrumental attack on the *status quo*. Traditional views may not have been actually wrong, but they were vague and were not entertained with sufficient commitment to work substantial technological changes.[52]

Indeed, Skinner's theories of behavior found exceptionally fertile ground in the late fifties and early sixties when national anxieties about education efficiency were heightened by the launch of Sputnik in 1957. This challenge to American technological and military prowess at the height of the Cold War galvanized ongoing debates over how to re-forge American educational institutions that failed to meet the high demand for engineers and scientists. Scrutinizing American education became a call to arms for politicians clamoring to have education involved in national preparedness against foreign aggression. Demands for higher standards and an expanded curriculum (with special emphasis on mathematics and science) resulted in the granting of federal aid for several legislative initiatives that were designed to improve schools and hire more teachers.[53] In the drive to increase the productivity of American education and solve the dual problems of "brain drain" and teacher shortages, many American educators began to consider the

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[52] Ibid.

[53] In terms of its implications for American technological and scientific readiness, the launching of Sputnik has been likened to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. For many, Sputnik illustrated the weaknesses of an educational system in the United States that had failed to produce the brainpower necessary to beat the Soviets in the space race. Confidence about American education had was linked to the Cold War, and the reform of education became a central priority. In response to this emergency, government aid for educational programs on a national scale was quickly initiated. For a discussion of the connections between postwar debates on education and the subsequent reform initiatives of the late 1950s and early 60s see Barbara B. Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Education Act of 1958* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981). For a definitive contemporary appraisal of the public debates among journalists, academicians, and education experts over the shortcomings of education in the 1950s, consult the collected essays in *The Great Debate: Our Schools in Crisis*, ed. C. Winfield Scott, Clyde M. Hill, and Hobert W. Burnes (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959).

new technologies of programmed learning and teaching machines as possible panaceas for this 'education crisis.'[54]

As historian of science Scott Montgomery has observed, the Sputnik launch accelerated an ongoing shift toward a team research model for secondary science education during the 1950s.[55] Cold War concerns among academics and legislators over what appeared to be the more efficient production system of Russian science education and technology fueled calls for more research on American education by the National Science Foundation starting in 1950, projects that later were funded through the National Education Defense Act of 1958. Scientific expertise and a group-research model for learning were embraced as a way to help speed up secondary education, particularly in math and science, the keys to American technological prowess.[56] Dorothy Nelkin noted that this science-centered curriculum model eventually succumbed to a decrease in the demand for scientists in the late 1960s and a return to formal methods. Popular concerns about the damaging effects of research science on humanity and the environment during this period were on the rise.[57] During its heyday in the early 1960s, however, the research production model was widely embraced by educational officials like J. B. Conant, with whom Skinner had conferred on education reform.[58] Skinner's teaching

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[54] Boehm, "Can People Be Taught Like Pigeons?," 176-79, especially page 37; Gay G. Luce, "Can Machines Replace Teachers?," *The Saturday Evening Post* 233 (September 24, 1960), 33-37. For a discussion of the 'education crisis' see Scott, Hill, and Burnes (eds.) above.

[55] Scott L. Montgomery, *Minds for the Making: The Role of Science in American Education, 1950-1990* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994), 199, 208.

[56] Ibid., 208, 212.

[57] Montgomery cites Dorothy Nelkin's study, *Science Textbook Controversy and the Politics of Equal Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), 214.

[58] For more on Conant, see page 156, note 3 in the present chapter.

technology had been designed to meet the high demand for accelerated learning during this time, especially in math education.

Skinner took full advantage of the situation in the early 1960s to promote his behavioral technology. In his public talks and interviews during this period he took advantage of Cold War fears, linking his achievements in the field of education directly to the preservation of American national integrity. In an article for the *Teachers College Record* in 1963 he declared,

> Competition between the various cultures of the world, warlike or friendly, is now an accepted fact, and the role played by education in strengthening and perpetuating a given way of life is clear. No field is in greater need of our most powerful intellectual resources. An effective educational technology based upon an experimental analysis will bring it support commensurate with its importance in the world today.[59]

The rapid proliferation of teaching devices and experimental programs, both academic and corporate, during the early sixties supported Skinner's intuition about the growing demand for new and expedient strategies of educational reform. The craze over teaching machines sparked widespread fervor in educational and public circles about the potential of such technologies to revolutionize the classroom. Although Skinnerian teaching machines themselves eventually fell out of vogue (due often to their expense), the programmed instruction (in textbook format and later with computer-based interactive programs) movement went on to exert considerable influence on education theory and instructional design in the remaining decades of the twentieth century.[60]

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[59] B. F. Skinner, "Reflections On a Decade of Teaching Machines," *Teachers College Record* 65, no. 2 (1963): 183-92. Reprint obtained from the Harvard University Archives, HUGFP 60.50, Box 1, Folder 2.

[60] Programmed instruction continues to influence education design up to the present day. It is taught in many graduate education programs and is implemented for a variety of uses in the public and private sector in training programs. For background on this history consult *Classic Writings in Instructional Technology*, ed. Donald P. Ely and Tjeerd Plomp (Englewood, CO.: Libraries Unlimited, 1996). I should also mention here my disagreement with Alexandra Rutherford on the causes of the failure of Skinnerian teaching

According to Skinner, the education psychologist, Sydney L. Pressey, had been the first scientist to develop a teaching machine in the 1920s for classroom use. Pressey constructed a machine that was primarily intended to help the student practice and learn rudimentary information and ease the burden of teachers who normally supervised such exercises.[61] The real innovation of the machine, however, was that it engaged the student in *active* learning using positive reinforcement, a technique familiar from Skinnerian behaviorism. Pressey's machine not only tallied correct scores on tests but also prompted

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machines to catch on. Although Rutherford rules out cost, it is cited as a contributing factor in numerous studies of the use of educational technology in the classroom during this period. See the references on the following pages. While I agree that the imagery of teaching machines in the popular press certainly contributed to concerns about its dehumanizing effects, it is also clear that, if not for the projected high cost of large-scale implementation in public schools, teaching machines would have witnessed much greater use. Again, evidence from contemporary educational studies clearly suggests that many school administrators, the professional managers of education, were very enthused about the potential of teaching machines to accelerate production in institutionalized education at the primary and secondary level. Bureaucratic inertia and cost concerns, however, prevented further implementation. Conversely, I would also argue that the rejection of Skinnerian teaching technology was only indirectly related to anti-technocratic political rhetoric. Theodore Roszak and other humanist critics of such technologies, writing with their own agendas in the popular press, represented a different constituency than that of educational administrators and policy makers. It also helps to explain their accusations as to the "social alienation," "conformity in thinking," the compromise of "creativity [and] imagination" and a general restriction of "freedom" in teaching technology that Rutherford mentions. These connotations did indeed exist, but there is also evidence in the popular press for public support of teaching technology, as it meshed well with what Rutherford and I agree is an American love of efficient technology, a phenomenon that persisted in the 1960s despite the political exhortations of the left. Too often, critics and historians alike have allowed the radical politics of reform and protest to dominate our historical understanding of the 1960s and its varied publics. It also seems to me that Rutherford's explanation for the "national concerns" that drove the marketing of Skinner's teaching machines are in need of further clarification. As I explain above, the initial impetus came from political debates over what in the late 1950s was thought to be a national education crisis. Demands for increased production efficiency in American education in order to compete with the Russians intensified. See Rutherford's comments on teaching technology in Rutherford, "B. F. Skinner's Technology of Behavior in American Life: From Consumer Culture to Counterculture," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 39, no. 1 (Winter, 2003): 1-23. See pages 7-12.

[61] For a fuller description of the design and aim of these machines see Sydney L. Pressey, "A Simple Apparatus Which Gives Tests and Scores – And Teaches," *School and Society* 23 (1926): 373-76, and "A Machine for Automatic Teaching of Drill Material," *School and Society* 25 (1927): 549-52. For a historical account of Pressey in relation to Skinner's work, as well as an account of his machine experiments at Harvard between 1956 and 1958 see E. A. Vargas and Julie A. Vargas, "B. F. Skinner and the Origins of Programmed Instruction," in Smith and Woodward, *B. F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, 237-53.

the user for the correct answer to questions before advancing to the next step.[62] Self-pacing allowed the student to proceed according to individual ability.[63]

Pressey's design was inspired by the behavioral theories of another education psychologist and central pioneer of programmed learning, Edward L. Thorndike. Pressey employed Thorndike's laws of learning to increase the efficiency of machine-aided instruction. These laws of *effect*, *recency*, and *exercise* correlated the consequences of responses with the frequency and repetition of questions asked by the machine.[64] Pressey had been the first to realize the potential of such behavioral methods for actual technologies of education. In the early 1960s Skinner reaffirmed Pressey's original complaint that such innovation seemed lost on the community of education psychologists who were preoccupied with quantifying memory and intelligence.[65] As he recalled, other psychologists such as E. L. Thorndike had overlooked the possibilities for teaching machines.

> Thorndike never realized the potentialities of his early work on learning because he turned to the measurement of mental abilities and to matched-group comparisons of teaching practices. He pioneered in a kind of

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[62] B. F. Skinner, *The Technology of Teaching* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), 31.

[63] Like Skinner, Pressey had high hopes for a science and technology of education, speculating that it would precipitate a new revolution in teaching efficiency. See Sidney L. Pressey, "A Third and Fourth Contribution Toward the Coming 'Industrial Revolution' In Education," *School and Society* 36 (1932): 668-72. Skinner would later speak in very similar terms about a revolution that seemed to him to be underway in the 1960s.

[64] For an outline of Thorndike's laws of learning and philosophy of education consult his seminal work on the subject, *Education: A First Book* (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

[65] Reflecting on these events Skinner expressed disappointment that the revolution had not transpired with Pressey and Thorndike in the 1920s. Thorndike had been the first to suggest the possibility of such machines in his book of 1912 on education, and yet, according to Skinner, he had failed to pursue their potential by turning his attention from programmed instruction to intelligence testing later in his career. There are several possible explanations for why such technologies failed to catch on, the Depression being one. The power of such technology must be wed to public demand, he contended, and the conditions were only now becoming ripe for a revolution. See Skinner, "Reflections On A Decade of Teaching Machines," 190.

> research which, with the encouragement offered by promising new statistical techniques, was to dominate educational psychology for decades. It led to serious neglect of the process of instruction.[66]

The need for accelerated education in the early 1960s, however, provided an ideal opportunity to join Skinnerian concepts of learning with modern industry and mass production. In arguing the need for mechanization in the classroom, Skinner again linked the efficiency and practicality of teaching machines to other devices in the 'culture of convenience' that had revolutionized the domestic sphere in the 1950s. How could a nation that had invested so much of its identity in the efficiency of machines, from automobiles to kitchen appliances, Skinner asked, not give similar consideration to devices that optimized the learning environment?[67]

By Skinner's own account, nothing of significance had surfaced in learning theory since the turn of the century and the introduction of the principles of progressive education by John Dewey.[68]

> Progressive education tried to replace the birch rod, and at the same time avoid the artificiality of grades and prizes, by bringing the reinforcers of everyday life into the school. ... But a school is only a small part of the student's world, and no matter how real it may seem, it cannot provide

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[66] Skinner, "Reflections on a Decade of Teaching Machines."

[67] B. F. Skinner, "The Science of Learning and the Art of Teaching," *Harvard Educational Review* 24 (1954): 86-97.

[68] Dewey's philosophy of education exerted considerable influence over education reforms in the 1930s, 40s, and especially the 50s. Urbanization and immigration were two of the primary factors in the initial shift of American education away from a traditional emphasis on intellectualism and standard subjects and toward social amelioration and adjustment. Progressive educators faced the task of creating curricula that would accommodate new cultural and socio-economic perspectives and help indoctrinate American rural and international immigrants into the major urban centers of the country. Dewey advocated a departure from pedagogic standardization that treated the student as a passive receptacle of information. Instead her argued for a student-centered environment, one that emphasized active learning. Central to Dewey's approach was the link between the student's experience in and outside of the classroom. Dewey believed that educational technique should be based on the learning experiences of children both as individuals and as members of a community who must adjust to a constantly changing environment. For a full delineation of Dewey's proposals see *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1899) and *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1938).

> natural reinforcing consequences for all the kinds of behavior which education is to set up. The goals of progressive education were shifted to conform to this limitation, and many worthwhile assignments were simply abandoned.[69]

While calls for reform in the 1950s had addressed the general need for better schools, more teachers, and better learning materials, Skinner pointed to a paucity of genuinely scientific studies on the process of learning itself.[70] Reams of statistical studies in education psychology had addressed the information retention and memory curves of subjects, but very little had been accomplished in examining the psychology of learning and the methodology of teaching. The craft of teaching, as Skinner often observed, was not so much taught as it was thrust upon initiates, especially at the secondary and college levels. Bad practices were perpetuated with each generation of teachers.[71] In an unpublished address to the New England Board of Higher Education, Skinner stressed the importance of examining education methods experimentally in order to evaluate their effectiveness.

> [I]t is argued that we need bigger and better schools, financial inducements to attract better teachers, changed emphases on subject matter, and so on. The methods of education are seldom examined. Yet no enterprise can really hope to improve itself without a close look at its own technology....[a] new and effective scientific analysis of behavior has much to offer here.

The first task in reorienting educational techniques, Skinner argued, was to do away with concepts and language traditionally used to explain the learning process. Skinner thus began his critiques of educational methodology in the early 1950s by

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[69] Skinner, "Why We Need Teaching Machines," 37.

[70] Skinner, "Reflections on a Decade of Teaching Machines," 185.

[71] Skinner, *Technology of Teaching*, 93-95.

addressing these terms and the processes involved in explaining the elusive concepts of cognition, association, and memory.[72] As with many branches of psychology, learning theory seemed to suffer from the same experimental inaccessibility to human nature. Whether one spoke of the active 'acquisition,' or the passive 'reception,' of information, such terms said little about the actual processes involved in the construction of knowledge. In the methodology of Skinnerian behaviorism, there was no need for concepts of knowledge or inner mental states. They were merely linguistic inventions that failed to create any useful experimental toehold on the control and quantification of learning.[73]

Skinnerian learning theory dealt directly with the *behavioral* variables (verbal, physical, or auditory) that were linked to the acquisition and use of information. By doing away with the concept of the inner mind and situating learning behavior in the environment of the organism, Skinner was able to recast learning theory in terms of relationships between organism and world.[74] This recasting opened the problem of learning up to direct manipulation. Because the basic laws of operant behavior applied universally, regardless of environment or species, Skinner simply translated the conventional language and theory of education into the principles of operant behavior in the experimental environment of the classroom, where, he argued, reinforcement architecture was in bad need of repair.[75] 'Teaching' was the task of mapping the

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[72] B. F. Skinner, "Are Learning Theories Necessary?," *Psychological Review* 57 (1950): 193-216.

[73] Skinner, *Technology of Teaching*, 1-2.

[74] Ibid., 3, 32-33.

[75] Ibid., 13-15.

contingencies of reinforcement already present in the classroom, streamlining them in order to elicit behaviors consistent with knowledge acquisition.[76]

In striking similarity to F. W. Taylor's approach to the production of manufactured goods, Skinner believed that efficiency in learning could be increased by breaking down information in any subject into small and simple parts. Skinner called these informational components 'frames.' Desired behaviors of learning were produced by the slow, gradual construction of links between informational fragments in arithmetic or English grammar, for example. In presenting the components of a mathematical equation or a sentence and having students select answers from a set of choices, or filling in blank spaces on a paper recorder, teaching machines used didactic questioning to elicit correct responses from the student. Information frames were kept simple enough so that students almost always met with correct answers to questions, receiving in turn a steady diet of positive reinforcement. These techniques were first implemented for primary and secondary education, but they were later used at the collegiate level, especially for language proficiency training. The high level of experimental success with these methods made it clear to Skinner that programmed learning revealed much more about the actual processes of knowledge acquisition than any abstract learning theory.[77]

Such a learning philosophy was also in line with those prominent contemporary educational theorists such as Jerome Bruner, a colleague of Skinner's at Harvard, who lobbied for production models of science education. In his classic tome *The Process of Education* (1960), Bruner had stressed the need for an educational revolution in math and

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[76] Ibid., 160-70. See also Skinner, "The Science of Learning and the Art of Teaching," 86-97.

[77] Skinner, *Technology of Teaching*, 47-50.

science to combat what he characterized as the national security crisis of domestic brain drain and foreign communist insurrection.[78] Bruner advocated a new learning theory that looked to mathematics and computer architecture for models of cognition.[79] This type of learning theory was similar to the kind of program metaphors in Skinnerian learning theory. And just as Skinner believed that behavioral learning theory was universal in all organisms, Bruner had concluded that the math/machine model also universalized learning theory for all subjects. Like Skinner, he believed that the differences in architecture between different subjects were of "degree not kind."[80] Bruner, like Skinner, advocated the use of teaching technology that employed a "sequential program" similar to Skinner's linear progressions of informational frames in teaching machines. Bruner also placed a high priority on all forms of programmed instruction that utilized these math/machine models of learning in order to speed up the learning process and churn out science graduates as fast as possible.[81] The demand for technological resources was also reflected in the National Science Foundation sponsorship of curricular reforms in the 1950s and 60s. These initiatives stressed the introduction of technology and multimedia in the science classroom.[82]

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[78] Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961, c1960), 2-10.

[79] Skinner, *Technology of Teaching*, 12-14.

[80] Ibid., 14.

[81] Bruner, *The Process of Education*, 81-82. Daniel Bjork notes, however, that Bruner came out against teaching machines in public schools, since he felt that many of the machine designs in the early 1960s seemed crude and unsophisticated. See Bjork, *Skinner*, 188, especially note 85, for an account of one of their exchanges on this subject.

[82] For an example see the National Science Foundation report, *Course Curriculum Improvement Projects -- Mathematics, Science, Engineering* (Washington D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

As much as it was inspired by industrial models of efficiency, Skinnerian learning theory also embraced the philosophy of progressive education.[83] John Dewey's aim had been to replace standardization with practical, real-world learning programs that made education more relevant to the cultural experiences of students.[84] Viewed in terms of behavioral contingencies, modern educational methods continued to place heavy dependence on what Skinner described as 'aversive controls.' Desired learning behavior was often accomplished by the threat of disapproval or punishment. The format of lessons and tests themselves reflected a traditional dependence on trial and error learning, competition, and negative consequences for poor performance.

Such techniques forced rather than encouraged desired behaviors from students. It was these conditions, Skinner claimed, that led to the usual behavioral "by-products" of

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[83] Progressive education is actually comprised of several schools of thought, the main lines of which emerged in the 1920s and 30s. Arthur Zilversmit has outlined the themes around which most of these competing schools revolved in his book, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Some progressives emphasized the need to provide both cultural indoctrination and vocational training, while others looked to the models of efficiency, bureaucratic centralization, and organizational control in business to solve the inefficiencies of public school systems. The first of these groups identified with Dewey while the other embraced the testing and standardization strategies of Thorndike. For more on the respective histories of these lines of development in American education consult the chapters on education in William Graebner's *The Engineering of Consent: Democracy and Authority in Twentieth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) and Douglas J. Simpson and Michael J. B. Jackson, *Educational Reform: A Deweyan Perspective* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997). The relationship between business models of administration and the drive to increase efficiency in education has also been skillfully explored in Raymond E. Callahan's *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). For a more comprehensive overview of the history of education theory in America see the recent study by Dickson A. Mungazi, *The Evolution of Educational Theory in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

In discussing the possibilities for teaching technology, Skinner recognized the merits of both Deweyan developmentalism and the experimentalism of Thorndike. Skinner saw that Thorndike had been right to embrace the mechanical view of the learning process and concentrate on manipulating the environmental conditions in which learning took place, but he was also sensitive to Dewey's concern for addressing the experiences of the individual and incorporating this into the classroom setting. Skinner viewed his technology as a marriage of the two perspectives.

[84] B. F. Skinner, "Why We Need Teaching Machines," *Harvard Educational Review* 31 (1961): 35-55. See page 37. Reprint obtained from the Harvard University Archives, HUGFP 60.50, Box 1, Folder 2.

the classroom environment: truancy, counter-aggression, and worst of all, apathy.[85] The advantage of operant behavioral techniques was that they provided a steady diet of positive reinforcement that kept students interested in learning. Programmed learning was immediate and tangible; it encouraged students through rewarding gradual progress rather than placing the rewards of education (grades, diploma, careers) at a distance. This made the process of learning much more efficient.[86] In a 1964 talk at Wayne State University entitled, "By the Year 2000," Skinner made assurances that, "[a]s the experimental analysis [of teaching] progresses [in the] next 25 or 30 years we will, I am sure, greatly increase the efficiency of education. With the same time and effort, our young people will be able to learn a great deal more than they do now."[87]

The advent of the teaching machine and programmed learning in the early sixties, it seemed to Skinner, marked a clear departure from traditional education theories. Teaching machines brought the progressive education concept of 'learning by doing' to the forefront. Students played an active role in building behavioral repertoires through self-pacing and frequent reinforcement.[88] Teaching machines built upon the study techniques that students normally used to learn assigned materials, and they made the process of *active learning* more efficient.[89]

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[85] B. F. Skinner, "The Theory Behind Teaching Machines." From an address to the ASTD 17th Annual Conference. 2 May 1961, HUGFP 60.50, Box 1, Folder 2.

[86] Skinner, "Why We Need Teaching Machines," 36.

[87] B. F. Skinner, "By the Year 2000." From a talk at Wayne State University. 1964, HUG 60.50, Box 1, Folder 1.

[88] Skinner, "Why We Need Teaching Machines," 45-46.

[89] Ibid., 47.

This strategy and philosophy of programmed teaching was not lost on entrepreneurs and administrators who recognized that the production efficiency of institutionalized education could be increased through what I will term the 'Taylorization' of classrooms and textbooks. The process of breaking down information into manageable parts and then reconstructing it in the behavior of the student through a schedule of reinforcement was not unlike that of product assembly in the factory, as one commentator in *Time* magazine observed.[90] As with Taylorism in the factory, the aura of efficiency proved to be an important tool in convincing potential consumers of the virtues of programmed instruction. As one researcher from the New York Institute of Technology remarked in 1959, "Education alone among all 'industries' in this country, has not increased productivity since 1900."[91]

Indeed, popular accounts showcased incredible feats of learning efficiency with automated self-instruction. Among them were astounding reports of junior high students learning a semester's worth of mathematics in two weeks and three-year-olds learning to read with machines in a matter of hours. According to some pilot studies in public schools, machines were helping students learn material in half the time they would have spent using conventional texts and classroom instruction.[92] Such feats not only promised a quick turn-around time and an increase in the volume of information students might

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[90] "The Teaching Machines," *Time* 76 (November 7, 1960): 91-92. Teaching machines received a great deal of exposure in the popular press and in professional education magazines. The mainstream news literature from the early sixties is quite extensive. The following references therefore represent a selection from a much larger collection.

[91] "For Brighter Students?," *Newsweek* 54 (August 17, 1959): 94-95. See page 95.

[92] Skinner, "Why We Need Teaching Machines," 44.

learn, but they also challenged the very structure of traditional grade-scaled, age-based education.[93]

Teaching machines also seemed to provide the kind of interactive learning and self-pacing that students of varying skill levels needed to maximize their performance. Unlike normal class exercises, lessons on machines encouraged students as they moved through information frames, and the machines allowed them to go at their own pace. Providing reinforcement at each step, it was claimed, induced a lasting enthusiasm for learning. Studies at UCLA comparing teacher- and machine-taught students indicated that such methods could potentially double the math test scores of fifth graders.[94] Other studies claimed a tenfold increase in the mastery of foreign languages by high school students.[95] One of the most publicized programs was initiated in 1960 in Roanoke, Virginia, where pilot studies indicated that junior high students could finish courses in higher mathematics in half the time normally required. Standardized tests administered to eighth graders saw 41% finish with the highest scores for the ninth grade level.[96]

By 1964 it looked as if Skinner's hopes for teaching technology had been realized. The initial promise that teaching machines held for streamlining instruction and revolutionizing education theory attracted considerable attention from companies eager to cash in on new markets for such technologies. Corporate sponsors followed Skinner's lead in touting their potential. By some accounts, education technology was poised to change what one writer for *Fortune* magazine called the "whole social structure of

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[93] Margaret B. Kreig, "What About Teaching Machines?," *Parent's Magazine* 36 (February, 1961): 44-45.

[94] "For Brighter Students?," *Newsweek* 54 (August 17, 1959): 94-95.

[95] Luce, "Can Machines Replace Teachers," 102.

[96] "Children Like Rats," *Newsweek* 56 (December 26, 1960): 56.

American youth."[97] The market for technologies of teaching, coupled with the pressing need for administrative and curricular solutions, also created a boon for publishers and research firms who invested large amounts of capital in the development of programmed instruction and machine design. The number of companies involved in teaching machine research and development surpassed 100 in the early sixties,[98] and speculators projected a 100 million-dollar industry.[99] Not only were well known publishing firms such as Macmillan, Doubleday, McGraw Hill, and Prentice-Hall lining up pilot studies and planning programmed texts, but an entirely new set of companies emerged around the market for teaching machines and programmed materials for use in public schools and corporate training programs.[100] International Business Machines (IBM) and the National Educational Association also launched a joint project (the Project on the Educational Implications of Automation, or EIA) to promote awareness of automated learning among teachers, administrators, and the public and to serve as an advisory wing for educational agencies nationwide.[101] By 1964 the use of education technologies in public schools had

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[97] Boehm, "Can People Be Taught Like Pigeons?," 176.

[98] Ted Morello, "Which Is It?, New World of Teaching Machines or Brave New Teaching Machines?," *UNESCO Courier* 18 (1965): 10-16.

[99] Boehm, "Can People Be Taught Like Pigeons?," 177.

[100] Ibid.

[101] A. S. Fleming, "Automation and Education: Report on NEA Project," *National Education Association Journal* 51 (1963): 33. Consult the study published by the EIA (Educational Implications of Automation), National Education Association, Symposium on the Educational Implications of Automation (Washington, D. C., 1963).

been firmly established with 15% actively using some form of programmed instruction, and 60% of American institutions providing training with these techniques.[102]

Compared with other countries that were experimenting with educational technology, however, the United States was relatively slow in incorporating programmed learning into its school systems. Great Britain, Germany and especially Japan, had moved much more rapidly into research and application of these technologies. The Soviet Union officially recognized programmed learning as a weapon of the Cold War.[103] Its use in developing countries was also explored by international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that sponsored programs and workshops in programmed instruction, especially in math, English, and science, to local educational agencies in the third world. This spirit of 'reform through retraining' was also strong in urban American schools where programmed instruction was used to teach both basic and specialized work skills to those who lacked a formal education.[104]

The efficiency of learning machines was enough to win over many educators at both the secondary and the college level. Programmed instruction and machines, they claimed, were nothing more than efficient 'textbooks' that served as aids to, rather than replacements for, real teachers.[105] Technologies of teaching were also attractive because they seemed able to cross the barriers of age, culture, language, intelligence, and class.

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[102] David Sohn, "P. I. -- Out of the Clouds and Into the Classroom," *Senior Scholastic* 84 (March 13, 1964) 16T, 9T-15T, especially page 13T.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 14T.

[105] Ibid., 12T; Eugene Galanter, "The Mechanization of Learning," *National Education Association Journal Symposium on Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning* 50 (November, 1961): 15-30.

The public demand for faster and more effective education was intense, and this drove technological innovation, just as it had in other areas of science and industry. Skinner had made a convincing case for the scientific analysis of teaching. He believed that it could be made as precise as physics or engineering.[106] As he remarked in his book, *The Technology of Teaching*, first published in 1968,

> These techniques made it possible to explore the complexities of the individual organism and to analyze some of the serial or coordinate behaviors involved in attention, problem solving, various types of self control, and the subsidiary systems of responses within a single organism called *personalities*.[107]

Yet despite the fact that the public enthusiasm for machines and programmed education remained strong, they were met with a mixed and cautious reception among many educators and social critics.[108] The specter of Orwell and burgeoning technocracy proved again to hamper the cause for Skinnerian behavioral technology and cast doubt on its social benefits. Teaching machines, some charged, threatened to dehumanize the classroom and relegate the role of the student to that of a laboratory animal.[109]

Skinner had been critical of an education establishment that, in response to poor student performance, merely had stressed the need for better schools and teachers. In their present form, Skinner believed that schools were exceptionally poor environments for cultivating educational excellence. Skinner argued that the conventional classroom was just as thoroughly structured and controlled an environment as anything his

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[106] Skinner, *Technology of Teaching*, 59-61.

[107] Ibid., 12. Italics mine.

[108] David Sohn, "P. I. Out of the Clouds and Into the Classroom," 12T.

[109] Skinner, *Technology of Teaching*, 26-27.

detractors were alleging about teaching technology. Traditional classrooms were far more oppressive and contrived than what was being proposed by educational technologists. The educational engineer aimed merely to subject the classroom setting to scientific scrutiny and replace aversive controls on behavior with schedules of positive reinforcement.[110] Only through experimental analysis, Skinner asserted, could the inefficiencies of education be addressed. Advocates of teaching machines maintained that the technology merely streamlined and optimized the behavioral mechanisms used to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling.

For some, teaching machines also threatened to take expertise out of the hands of educators and put it into those of machine programmers. The fate of human teachers thus also became the subject of considerable debate in academic circles. Designing effective programs required an intimate knowledge of behavioral concepts and reinforcement schedules, rather than of traditional teaching methods. As proponents assured, however, teaching machines would merely reduce the amount of time spent on rote memorization and basic exercises. Echoing Pressey's original claim, Skinner and his corporate backers argued that teaching machines would help instill the basic elements of a subject and leave teachers free to put students to work on more creative endeavors.

Skinner was able successfully to market the more liberating aspects of programmed learning, touting it as a technology that would free students from an arbitrary and tightly regimented curriculum.[111] From reports in the mainstream press, it appeared that technologies of teaching had the appeal of tailoring lessons and exercises to

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[110] Skinner, "Reflections On A Decade of Teaching Machines," 183.

[111] Skinner, *Technology of Teaching*, 238.

each student's individual abilities and pace. As Skinner noted in his book, *The Technology of Teaching* in 1968,

> These techniques made it possible to explore the complexities of the individual organism and to analyze some of the serial or coordinate behaviors involved in attention, problem solving, various types of self control, and the subsidiary systems of responses within a single organism called personalities.[112]

It was the teaching machine's role as a supremely patient tutor, specially designed to cater to individual styles of learning that might not be compatible with traditional group methods, that made Skinner's inventions that much more attractive. Teaching machines, it was argued, would ameliorate one of the biggest flaws in the present educational system, namely, the failure to recognize individuality in learning.[113] Although some schools employed a "multi-track" system for groups with various aptitudes, standardization still proved to be a problem for many. Teaching technologies, Skinner claimed, were able to accommodate a wide variety of learning styles and aptitudes.

Perhaps the most compelling element of Skinner's campaign for programmed learning was his claim that intellectual and creative abilities were not predetermined, but were in fact dependent on the environment. Skinner made the revolutionary claim that such human characteristics could be behaviorally enhanced. Rather than view creativity or genius as human qualities defined by inheritance, Skinner proposed that they were better conceived of as behaviors to be cultivated.[114]

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[112] Ibid., 12.

[113] Ibid., 241-43.

[114] Ibid., 170.

As with his social theories in *Walden Two*, Skinner's educational philosophy, fully explained and implemented, challenged the traditional stereotypes surrounding behavioral psychology. Skinner had set out to dispel the notion that behavioral technology curtailed the diversity of human potential. Certainly it was true that, from an experimental perspective, the concept of behavioral determinism was valuable in opening the door on human nature in the search for causes.[115] As products of both environmental and genetic conditioning, however, the diversity and caprice of humanity were not in question. In his drive to sell the liberating power of the machine for individual students, Skinner cast himself again in the unlikely role of antiestablishment humanist scientist, a role befitting the social critic of the 1960s. By his own reckoning, the "laboratory study of learning" was the only real path for what he termed the "successful instrumental attack on the *status quo*" in institutionalized education.[116] The proliferation of programmed instruction during the 1960s was justification enough for Skinner to regard his role in this booming 'industry' as that of antiestablishment revolutionary.

Although Skinner's dream of future humanity was not realized through educational reform during the 1960s, the widespread use of programmed instruction in business is an enduring testament to a public desire to maximize efficiency. Indeed, the present-day industry in instructional technology continues to reflect a mechanistic approach to the self. In selling educators on the usefulness of conceptualizing human beings as collections of learned behaviors in the 1960s, Skinner contributed significantly

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[115] Ibid., 170-72.

[116] Skinner, "Why We Need Teaching Machines," 55.

to the reification of the programmable, mechanistic self in modern methods of programmed instruction.

Contemporary literature bears this out with a number of significant statistics. A survey among secondary school principals conducted by the National Education Association in 1960-61 indicated that 13% of schools were using some form of programmed instruction. Its projected use in schools by 1965-66 was estimated at 65%, indicating a high degree of administrative enthusiasm for the managerial potential of programmed instruction (PI).[117] Most of the successful applications of PI in schools were in language (reading, English, foreign languages, verbal skills) and mathematics. Mathematics in particular saw the widest application, comprising 64% of all applications.[118] In her exhaustive survey of the use of teaching machines and PI in primary and secondary education during the 1960s, however, Martha Casas has argued that their implementation was limited within schools that reported using them. Programmed textbooks, she contends, saw much wider use than teaching machines. In

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[117] The survey was cited in Peter H. Rossi and Bruce J. Biddle, *The New Media and Education: The Impact on Society* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966), 226. A sample of the considerable literature that was devoted to assessing programmed instruction in the 1960s would include Nancy S. Anderson, *Automatic Teaching: The State of the Art* (New York: Wiley, 1959) and *Programmed Learning and Computer Based Instruction: Proceedings of the Conference On the Application of Digital Computers to Automated Instruction, Washington, D. C., 1961* (New York: Wiley, 1962). For a survey of four particular case studies in public schools see, Fund for the Advancement of Education (sponsored by the Ford Foundation), *Four Case Studies of Programmed Instruction* (New York, 1964). See also Stuart Margulies and Lewis D. Eigern, *Applied Programmed Instruction* (New York: Wiley, 1962). For commentary on the use PI at the end of the decade, consult Allen D. Calvin, ed., *Programmed Instruction: Bold New Venture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969). For contemporary studies of computer assisted learning see *Computer Assisted Instruction, Testing, and Guidance*, ed. Wayne H. Holtzman (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) and *Computer Assisted Instruction: A Book of Readings*, ed. Atkinson and Wilson (New York: Academic Press, 1969).

[118] Lincoln F. Hanson and P. Kenneth Komoski, "School Use of Programmed Instruction," in *A Sourcebook for the Use of Teaching Machines and Programmed Instruction*, 2 vols., ed. Julian I. Taber, Robert Glaser and Halmuth H Schaefer (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1965), 648.

the end, it appears, these technologies were, at the time, no more or less effective than traditional methods.[119]

Programmed instruction became more established in the corporate sector, however, where it was used in designing training programs for computer programming, business writing, data entry, billing procedures, banking, and a host of technical activities. Between 1960 and 1963 the use of PI in industry rose 33%.[120] The efficiency potential of PI was also strong among government and military agencies that used it to standardize training programs. Both corporate and government use of PI illustrated its advantages in standardizing procedures and ensuring quality control.[121] A survey of recent literature on instructional technology in secondary education and occupational training in industry also yields ample evidence of PI's continued legacy in education. By one estimate the use of computer-based instructional technology at the college level for remedial learning (reading, writing, and mathematics) averaged 35 to 40% in 2000.[122]

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[119] Martha Casas, "The History Surrounding the Use of Skinnerian Teaching Machines and Programmed Instruction (1960-1970)" (Ph.D. Ed. diss., Harvard University, 1997). It should be noted that Casas centers much of her argument on the influence of Skinner and the phenomenon of programmed instruction. She argues that, while inspiring its popularization, Skinner himself had little to do with its commercialization. Casas also argues that the negative reception of PI and teaching machines in the popular press would have occurred regardless of Skinner's association with it. As he was in fact strongly associated with it, Casas contends that the negative press that he received in the 1950s over the baby tender factored into his public image with regard to teaching machines in the 1960s.

[120] H. A.. Shoemaker and H. O Holt, "The Use of Programmed Instruction in Industry," in *Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning: A Reader*, 2 vols., ed. Robert Glaser and A. A. Lumsdaine (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, Department of Audiovisual Instruction, 1960-65), 685-742, especially pages 691-96.

[121] Glenn L. Bryan and John A. Nagay, "Use of Programmed Instruction Materials in Federal Government Agencies," in Robert Glaser, *Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning*, 743-70. See page 751.

[122] These statistics apply to "Title IV degree-granting institutions" that offer on-campus remedial coursework for these subjects and indicate a level of frequent use by students. See Basmati Parsad and Laurie Lewis, "Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000," United States Department of Education, *Statistical Analysis Report for the National Center for Education Statistics*, November 28, 2003, Publication Number: NCES 2004-010, 33.

Skinner is still regularly invoked as the founder of the movement. In professional journals and manuals, training specialists often discuss the process of designing new systems of skill acquisition in the workplace, and they use terminology that connotes the mechanistic view of human nature. Designers write of "up-skilling" and "de-skilling," loading and unloading workers with task sequences according to the changing demands of the factory and the office.[123] In the area of secondary education there is the example of Instructional Computer Technology (ICT) where depictions of the student as an engineered product abound.[124] The growing sophistication of computers, designers claim, makes it possible to construct ITS (Intelligent Tutoring Systems). ITS combines interactive media with computer programs that are designed to diagnose, or 'model,' the student according to various criteria that include cognitive style, modes of language acquisition, and memory architecture.[125] Designers continue to make the same claims for these computer applications as Skinner made for mechanical teaching machines in the 1960s. As had Skinner, ITS engineers stress the advantages of machine-based instruction over human teaching in adjusting to the learning styles of individual students. Some speculate that the coming developments in artificial intelligence will enhance this capability considerably. Echoing Skinner, designers also claim that such technology will

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[123] Roger Penn and Michael Rose, *Skill and Occupational Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[124] For an example of collected papers and essays on the development of ITS strategies and systems see the conference proceedings in *Intelligent Tutoring Systems: 5th International Conference, ITS 2000, Montreal, Canada, June 19-23, 2000*, ed. Claude Frasson and Kurt Van Lehn (New York: Springer, 2000). For a historical overview of ITS and examples of recent design developments see Mark Elson-Cook, *Guided Discovery Tutoring: A Framework for ICAI Research* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1990).

[125] Marilyn Leask and Norbert Pachler, *Learning to Teach Using ICT in the Secondary School* (London: Routledge, 1999). See also William R. Murray, *An Endorsement-Based Approach to Student Modeling for Planner-Controlled Intelligent Tutoring Systems* (Brooks Air Force Base, TX: Armstrong Laboratory, Air Force Systems Command, 1991).

reduce the failure rate in the classroom and encourage students to think more critically. And, of course, this will all save money and time in the schools.[126]

Clearly then, in the current industry of instructional technology in education and business, there is continuing fascination with the idea of engineered humanity, the kind that Skinner promoted in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Even in the most recent textbooks in programmed instruction, like *Learning to Teach Using ICT in the Secondary School*, there seems to be an invocation of a Skinnerian legacy. In terms of education theory, for example, it is said that,

> [ICT is] in the behavioral tradition [and it,] explains learning in terms of *operant* conditioning where the student responds to a stimulus in a particular way. [L]earning is broken down into a sequential series of small steps, each covering a piece of the subject domain or particular skill. The computer program models the role of the tutor.[127]

Skinner's legacy continued to influence late twentieth-century mechanistic conceptions of the self among industrialists and corporate managers whose systems of production demanded the efficient use of human resources. Americans have been willing partners in this evolution.

A Return to Community in an Age of Technocracy

During the early 1960s when young radicals in the counterculture were rebelling against the 'establishment' and rediscovering the graces of the land, Skinner's utopian

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[126] For more on contemporary ITS and ICT programs in American schools see Hugh Burns and James W. Parlett, *Intelligent Tutoring Systems: Evolutions in Design* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1991); Martha C. Polson and J. Jeffrey Richardson, *Foundations of Intelligent Tutoring Systems* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1988); Karen Littleton and Paul Light, *Learning With Computers: Analyzing Productive Interaction (*New York: Routledge, 1999); W. Michael Reed and John K. Burton, *Multimedia and Megachange: New Roles for Educational Computing* (New York: Haworth Press, 1994).

[127] Leask and Pachler, *Learning to Teach Using ICT*, 8. Italics mine.

fantasy was read along with accounts of Walden, Brook Farm, the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and other experimental environments. With an updated introduction, Skinner re-deployed *Walden Two* in the early 1960s. In this incarnation it was a work of social analysis that played to the traditional longings of utopian dreamers but also added contemporary twists. It offered Skinnerian social technology as a solution to contemporary social ills.

The Cold War had taken a psychological toll on those who had worked hard to live up to the ideals of the 'good life' and the strong nuclear family, conspicuous consumerism, and corporate-inspired models of community, work, and values. In the early 1960s social critics like William H. Whyte Jr., C. Wright Mills, and others like Rachel Carson began to point out the dangers of organizing culture too much around the technologies and bureaucracies of commerce and industry. In his famous treatise on the deleterious effects of large corporate organizations on young technocrats, *The Organization Man* (1956), Whyte warned that the social matrix of the corporation was undermining the evolution of people-centered social ethics.

> No generation has been so well equipped, psychologically as well as technically, to cope with the intricacies of vast organizations; none has been so well equipped to lead a meaningful community life; and none probably will be so adaptable to the constant shifts in environment that organization life is so increasingly demanding of them. ...They are all, as they say, in the same boat.
>
> But where is the boat going? No one seems to have the faintest idea; nor, for that matter, do they see much point in even raising the question. Once people liked to think, as least, that they were in control of their destinies, but few of the younger organization people cherish such notions. Most see themselves as objects more acted upon than acting – and their future, therefore, determined as much by the system as by themselves.[128]

[128] William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 437.

Humanist social scientists such as C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) warned that the social ethics of scientific experts, those who managed and controlled the matrices of human organization, would also be compromised by vast bureaucracies where allegiance to *the system* would determine moral choices about how people should live.

> Whatever else [the society of the United States] is, surely this is evident: it is a society in which functionally rational bureaucracies are increasingly used in human affairs and in history-making decisions. Not all periods are alike in the degree to which historical changes within them are independent of willful control, go on behind all men's backs. Ours seems to be a period in which key decisions or their lack by bureaucratically instituted elites are increasingly sources of historical change. Moreover, it is a period and a society in which the enlargement and the centralization of the means of control, of power, now include quite widely the use of social science for whatever ends those in control of these means may assign to it. To talk of 'prediction and control' without confronting the questions such developments raise is to abandon such moral and political autonomy as one may have.[129]

These and other high profile critiques of American society in the late 1950s and early 1960s called into question the very institutions and systems of social management that had brought America to the height of world economic and political power. What were the cultural costs of this campaign on the social environment? Moreover, what was the cost to the *natural* environment?

New revelations from scientists such as Rachel Carson about the environmental effects of industrial expansion called the authority of science and government even further into question. In one of the most controversial books of the early 1960s, *Silent Spring* (1962), Carson presented the conflict between scientific expertise and public awareness on the issue environmental devastation.

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[129] C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 115-16.

> This is an era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits. It is also an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged. When the public protests, confronted with some obvious evidence of damaging results of pesticide applications, it is fed little tranquilizing pills of half truth. We urgently need an end to these false assurances, the sugar coating of unpalatable facts. It is the public that is being asked to assume the risks that the insect controllers calculate. The public must decide whether to continue on the present road, and it can do so only when in full possession of the facts. In the words of Jean Rostand, "The obligation to endure gives us the right to know."[130]

The open questioning of authority and convention gained momentum in the early 1960s, and Skinner's social message, curiously enough, found a new audience among the disillusioned. His ideas attracted the baby boom generation, now reaching their twenties and searching for alternatives to the urban life and the corporate complex. It seemed to many of them that technological and industrial advancement had done little to alleviate social ills. If anything, the expansion of technocracy had done just the opposite. A good many in this growing counterculture sought a return to a more humane and simple existence.

Through the sixties and early seventies the sales of *Walden Two* grew dramatically. Between 1948 and 1960 the novel sold only 9000 copies. By the end of 1961, it had sold 8000 more and sales doubled for the next three years. By the early 1970s circulation had topped a million.[131] The novel carried less of the stigma of scientific sterilization, socialism, communism, or anti-humanism than it had in the era of McCarthy and the Red scare. Instead, new readers were drawn to the same idea of simple living that had first attracted Skinner to Thoreau and *Walden*. WT was a place away

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[130] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962), 13.

[131] B. F. Skinner, *A Matter of Consequences* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 358-59.

from urban chaos, a return to the land, to old ways of living, but with a new technology to make it work.

In the early 1960s Skinner shifted the focus of his public lectures from teaching technology to experimental living and the possibilities of setting up communities for research.[132] Groups of students across the country such as the *D. C. Walden II Committee* began to hold regular meetings and discuss plans for trying out what Skinner had proposed in the novel. The book was increasingly discussed in college courses, and it went into paperback for easier distribution.[133] Predictably, commentaries on Skinnerian theory again proliferated among social critics such as George Kateb, Anthony Burgess, Arthur Koestler, Margaret Mead, Karl Popper, and Carl Rogers.[134] Such counterculture celebrities as Timothy Leary and Henry S. Huntington made inquiries to Skinner about such communities.

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., 178.

[134] George Kateb was a well-known utopian scholar and critic of Skinner's vision. See his book of collected essays on utopian theory that includes commentary by both Skinner and Margaret Mead in Kateb's *Utopia* (New York: Atherton Press, 1971) and his extended discussions on the idea of utopia in *Utopia and Its Enemies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963). The literary scholar and social critic, Anthony Burgess, wrote his famous novel, *A Clockwork Orange* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), as part of his direct challenge to Skinner and broader trends in what he saw as the dehumanizing technologies of behaviorism. See also an essay attacking Skinner's utopian fantasies by Burgess, "A Fable for Social Scientists," *Horizon* 15, no. 6 (Winter, 1973): 12-15. The renowned philosopher of science, Karl Popper, who was also a highly regarded social and political critic, wrote a scathing critique of Skinner's book, *Technology of Teaching*, in 1968 dismissing Skinner's theory of learning as untenable. Popper also argued against the implications for scientific totalitarianism in his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963, c1947). The humanist psychologist Carl Rogers, like Margaret Mead, was also an outspoken critic of Skinner's views of humanity and psychology. He invoked Popper's idea of the "open society" to argue that Skinner's was an anti-human image of humankind and that it would lead to a repressive culture if embraced. See Rogers' debate with Skinner on these and other points in Carl R. Rogers and B. F. Skinner, "Some Issues Concerning the Control of Human Behavior," *Science* 124 (1956): 1057-1066, especially page 1064. Margaret Mead spoke against Skinner's brand of behavioral social theory on different occasions. See Margaret Mead, "Behavioral Science," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* 25 (December, 1969): 8-10; *Continuities in Cultural Evolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 237-239.

The excitement over *Walden Two* was also apparent from Skinner's personal reaction to his renewed celebrity. He again considered a run at a community experiment and the chance to play the role of Frazier for real. He recalled devoting most of his personal notes to the details of planning and constructing an experimental community, and taking his new novel up again. Skinner gave careful thought to each aspect of the community, from the architecture of the buildings to the distribution of goods and services.[135] He also kept informed about other projects in communal living such as the Kibbutz movement in Israel. He recalled analyzing the rules and practices of religious monastic orders and utopian communities from history by reading the *Rule of St. Benedict*[136] and the *Rules of the Society of Jesus*,[137] evaluating their utility for a Walden Two community. He studied the history of communes set up by noted utopians such as Étienne Cabet in Texas.[138] Skinner also had plans to produce a pamphlet for interested groups on how to set up a commune. He corresponded with philosophers, architects, and interested financiers in the late 1960s.

At one point Skinner even entertained offers from the Central Intelligence Agency which sought to provide him with information and funding for a community based on reports of communal experiments in Russia know as "microrayons." Microrayons were

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[135] B. F. Skinner, *A Matter of Consequences*, 84-85.

[136] St. Benedict established this standard for the structure and purpose of the Benedictine monastic community in this work. It was written approximately between 535 and 540 A.D. and has been published in numerous translations. Consult Saint Benedict, Abbot of Monte Cassino (ca. 535-540 A.D.), *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Leonard Doyle (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001).

[137] This document was the representative work of the Counter-Reformation and provided the articulation of a new religious order in the Jesuits. It was written by St. Ignatius of Loyola beginning in 1539. Consult Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1539), *Rules of the Society of Jesus: A New Translation from the Latin*, trans. Jesuit Order (Woodstock, MD: Woodstock College Press, 1956).

[138] Skinner, *Consequences*, 289-90.

apparently situated within urban centers and were self-contained, with their own housing, factories, hospitals, schools and stores. Skinner was asked to set up a similar complex, but he declined over reservations about the behavioral techniques allegedly being used in such installations. Skinner did, however, come very close to striking a deal with one of several financiers he queried about funds for a community. The Arthur D. Little Company, a business management consulting firm, offered to bankroll the project, but as with the CIA, Skinner declined to have outside controls placed on his designs.[139] In 1967 the Johnson Foundation, an organization dedicated to the promotion of sustainable community development, provided Skinner with money for what turned out to be a large conference dedicated to the design of experimental communities.[140] He also received offers from several movie studios to buy the rights to *Walden Two*.

Although Skinner never found the right combination of conditions to make Walden Two into a reality, he continued to promote the technologies that such a community would utilize, and that contemporary society might use as vehicles of social reform. By the late 1960s, Skinner had found both an academic and public audience for his theories. He saw himself as someone who had challenged the 'status quo,' as he put it, and who had garnered something of a cult following in the counterculture. Although Skinner disavowed any such association, he seemed willing to acknowledge a role for *Walden Two* as a significant catalyst in the movement.[141] By 1965 Skinner was known and talked about in academic circles. Professional and university audiences for his

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[139] Ibid., 264.

[140] Ibid., 290.

[141] Ibid., 307.

numerous public lectures, he felt, were now conversant with the basic principles of Skinnerian behaviorism. Skinner found himself needing less time to explain key principles and theories. He could devote more effort to presenting the technical details of his technologies to groups of educators and physicians interested in applying them in the workplace.[142]

As many of his detractors had pointed out in the past, however, Skinner failed to address the possibility of totalitarianism in a society managed by scientists and engineers. It might work on a small scale, but certainly the example of the Soviet State indicated the compromise in human values and dignity that a larger enterprise entailed. Skinner nevertheless believed that his novel had served a role in galvanizing the counterculture movement. And indeed it had, among some.

A Walden Two Experiment[143]

As David Shi observed in his study of communal life and utopianism in American history, communitarian aims spanned a wide range of political, religious, and social perspectives. The search for simplicity, however, was common to all of them. Further, this quest in the American context has been particularly unique, since the ideal of simplicity has always had a strong connection to American cultural ideals and heritage stemming back to colonial times.[144] It was from this transcendentalist literary and

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[142] Ibid., 271.

[143] The title for this section is taken from Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1973).

[144] See David Shi, *In Search of the Simple Life* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1986).

experimental tradition that Skinner derived much of his personal inspiration for *Walden Two*. Like Thoreau, Skinner had spent time in quiet contemplation in the 1950s, designing and testing new techniques to optimize his own time and work, creating a personal regimen in order to put his intellectual creativity on a sound scientific footing. Skinner also worked out an ethic for the individual in community. *Walden Two* combined a return to simplicity with the classically American themes of pietism, republicanism, and transcendentalism.

Many in the 1960s sought what C. Wright Mills had referred to in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959)[145] as a 'return to membership' in social life. The control of basic community and family functions, those aspects of collective living that fostered a sense of belonging for each member, had to be reclaimed and begun anew. For the new generation of communalists wanting to return to the land and the life of the 'tribe' in the late 1960s and early 70s, Skinner's appeal to individual sacrifice for the sake of the collective, and his emphasis on simplification and small-scale living, struck a chord. The pro-active approach to alternative living in America prompted a generation of radicals like the 'diggers' to move ahead with organized experiments in communal living.[146] For a small minority of readers, *Walden Two* literally served as a blueprint. The most lasting and famous example of these communities was the Twin Oaks farm project in Louisa, Virginia, which began in 1970 with two-dozen members and continued in operation for over ten years.

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[145] Charles Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

[146] For an overview of this counterculture phenomenon, consult R. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971) and Keith Melville, *Communes and the Counterculture* (New York: Morrow, 1972).

Like most other communes of the period many of its members were seeking to escape from unfulfilling home or work lives.[147] Unlike many others however, the Twin Oaks commune was not merely a site for escapism and retreat. Its professed goal was to recast community maintenance using Skinnerian behavioral principles.[148] With the proper methods and techniques, social bonding could be made more efficient. In reality, however, much of Skinner's methodology was modified or discarded as the colony developed and learned about what did and did not work. Nevertheless, the basic approach to living remained the same. Community property and care of children were held in common and a willingness to experiment with human behavior in order to mold better living spaces, and better people, was a goal that remained part of Twin Oaks.

Skinner again took full advantage of the opportunity to promote his social theories by associating himself with these communal experiments. These communities were willing to reject social convention in favor of exploration. In his introduction to Kathleen Kinkade's book about the Twin Oaks experiments, Skinner took credit for have presaged the revolt against traditional culture, and for facilitating his own small rebellion in the counterculture. At the end of the 1960s, when American society seemed to be headed for disaster, however, the publication of Skinner's magnum opus, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), would permanently solidify his status as a scientific icon.

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[147] Roberts, *The New Communes*, 93.

[148] For a full description of the history and initial aims of the Twin Oaks community see the documentary account in Kathleen Kinkade's *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1973). See also Ingrid Komar's *Living the Dream: A Documentary Study of the Twin Oaks Community, Communal Societies and Utopian Studies Book Series*, vol. 1 (Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1983).

Social Collapse and Skinnerian Solutions after the 1960s

Beyond Freedom and Dignity (1971)[149] (BFD) was the culmination of Skinner's career-long drive to promote his behavioral social theories and explain their relevance in culture that had undergone massive transformations since the turn of the century. Fears of nuclear and conventional war, economic recession, environmental devastation, and an energy crisis loomed large at the end of the 1960s. Skinner, as always, deftly exploited the mood of the country to present his indictment of modern humanity and society in this his most controversial work. BFD laid out the sacrifices that humankind would have to make in order to survive as a species. It required no less than a new vision of the self, and a new ethic for managing social systems.

As an evolutionary social theorist, Skinner believed that the first step in constructing an ethic for social management was to eliminate the self as it had been constructed in Western culture. The ideal of "autonomous man," in Western literature and philosophy, possessed of ultimately unknowable inner qualities -- spirit, rationality, feelings -- was a myth that human society could no longer afford to sustain. If humans were to survive their own civilization, their relationship to the collective required the sacrifice of individual choice.

> The history of an idea which has kept essentially the same for two thousand years is a history of failure. The more eminent the names subscribed to the idea the more ignominious its record. What can be said for the conception of a "natural freedom of self-determination" where forty four men of genius (from Anselm to Whitehead, in alphabetical order) have never been able to make it "march"? Should we not conclude either that the problem of freedom is insoluble or that this is not the way to solve it? ...Any serious consideration of the problem of freedom must

[149] B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1971). It is worth noting that this work went through nine printings in the first six months after its initial publication.

> [now] face not only the growing list of achievements of a science of human behavior but the conception of man which emerges from it.[150]

As Skinner observed, however, the use of science and technology to solve social problems had only been partially successful in advancing social progress. The haphazard use of technology in such areas as reproductive science, agriculture, industry, and medicine had resulted in the overall degradation of the natural environment. This was, of course, a message familiar to the readers of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. It was not enough for scientists and social critics, Skinner argued, to make appeals for humanized technology: "[s]uch expressions imply that where human behavior begins, technology stops, and that we must carry on, as we have in the past..." A design had to come from the social sciences, Skinner declared. "[W]hat we need is a technology of human behavior."[151]

Skinner contended that getting a proper hold on bureaucracy and technocracy was a matter of controlling entire populations. This could only occur with a shift from the socially constructed morality and ethics that celebrated the dignity of the 'inner man,' to a focus on the conditions of the surrounding environment, both local and global.[152] Rules and values in society were nothing more than factual contingencies to be analyzed and altered.[153] Relocating the source of human behavior in the environment also removed much of the blame from the individual who failed to meet an unrealistic moral

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[150] B. F. Skinner. From a collection of Skinner's private notes on a seminar conducted in the summer of 1958 at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions where he was responding to comments by Alfred Adler. HUGFP 60.50, Box 1, Folder 1.

[151] Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, 3.

[152] Ibid., 18-19.

[153] Ibid., 108.

imperative. Properly constructed technologies of behavior instead could determine 'good and bad' on the basis of efficiency and survivability. In this sense, Skinner's Darwinian view of a culture was like that of a species, subject to the pressures of the environment, constantly adapting to preserve itself.

Skinner believed that humans were best understood as physical systems. He observed, however, that people react instinctively to any form of control, whether harmful or beneficial, as an infringement on human autonomy.[154] We praise those who demonstrate independence, Skinner said, and dignity is bound to freedom as the expression of autonomy.[155] Our ability to weather adverse conditions -- to engage in unnecessary behavior in order to illustrate our triumph over adversity -- is taken as a hallmark of human uniqueness. The 'state of mind' that inclines us toward personal autonomy as an ideal, however, as Skinner argued, was an illusion. The science of behaviorism illustrated that all organisms were subject to some set of environmental contingencies. Freedom was more properly characterized as the sense of agency one has in the *perceived* escape from control.[156] Our experience of freedom and dignity thus was merely a consequence of positive behavioral reinforcement.[157]

A realistic conception of the individual in society, Skinner thought, should be based on our scientific understanding of its biological and social contingencies.[158] If, Skinner asked, constructive social behavior, namely that which promotes individual

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[154] Ibid., 38.

[155] Ibid., 51-52.

[156] Ibid., 36.

[157] Ibid., 41.

[158] Ibid.

happiness, cohesion in the community, and the survival of social systems as a whole, is the ultimate goal of modern society, what was the proper course of action in constructing social policy and infrastructure? The classic American tradition of an open democracy had emphasized individual responsibility for behaving appropriately and doing good works (such as avoiding vice, not committing crime, being a productive citizen, and voting in elections). In the highly engineered matrix of modern urbanized culture, however, systems of aversive control were regularly used at every stage of individual development and in every environment of social activity in order to coerce desired behavior and deter destructive activity. Our focus in social engineering, Skinner believed, should therefore be on constructing behavioral contingencies that prevent objectionable behavior, promote the moral and physical welfare of individuals, and ensure the survival of the collective society. The task should be to replace punitive, or what Skinner called "aversive," measures of control already in use with reinforcements that were scientifically engineered to induce constructive social behavior.

Skinner often likened the process of social evolution to that of Darwinian biological evolution. In Darwinian evolution, the ultimate value of any variation in behavior was its potential to add to the survivability of the species. The same was true of cultural evolution.

> The simple fact is that a culture which *for any reason* induces its members to work for its survival, or for the survival of some of its practices, is more likely to survive. Survival is the only value according to which a culture is eventually to be judged, and any practice that furthers survival has survival value by definition.[159]

[159] Ibid., 130.

But as in biological evolution, it is not always initially clear which individual variations will contribute to the overall survival of society. Skinner believed that cultural engineers, those who would design social infrastructure, could learn to accelerate social evolution and increase the survivability of the species. As with animal husbandry in Darwin's time, artificial control of the 'natural,' or in this case, traditional culture, could be mastered. The need to understand the collective effects of individual behavior thus became even more vital. Hence, as Skinner concluded, "[t]he task of the cultural designer is to accelerate the development of practices which bring the remote consequences of behavior into play."[160] By improving conditions for the individual, collective social evolution would eventually be optimized. This basic message was disseminated to the public by other social commentators such as Margaret Mead.

By the time Skinner came to write *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, his school of thought on social reform had been firmly established. What made his evaluation of modern civilization and his critique of the self in this, his master stroke, so poignant in the early 1970s as opposed to the early 1950s, was that it appeared at a time when generational conflict and open protest against American technocracy was in full swing. The thoroughly public nature of the American political and social crisis of the early 1970s afforded Skinner a much broader audience for his ideas. Skinner deployed his opinions skillfully just when he perceived that Americans might be most receptive to Skinnerian social panaceas.

The growing realization among Americans that modern technocracy and the death of the self might already have come to pass is indicated in the sheer panic that the book

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[160] Ibid., 137.

elicited among Skinner's familiar detractors. Skinner seemed to have argued quite convincingly that the new programmable self had to be embraced if society was to survive. In considering the inroads that behaviorism made into the cultures of work, home, and community, in the postwar decades, it seemed to many social critics that Americans had already accepted such a view of the self, although perhaps grudgingly.

A Firestorm of Controversy

> *We can no longer afford freedom, says B. F. Skinner, the most influential and controversial psychologist of our time; we must design our culture to shape the behavior needed for survival. Here is Skinner's masterwork -- a brilliant analysis of today's most pressing problems and a stunning, detailed plan for change that challenges many of Western man's most sacred ideals and personal freedoms. Considered "one of the most important happenings in 20th-century psychology," this book has already stirred nationwide debate through the force and shock of its ideas.*
>
> ~Caption on back jacket of the 1972 edition of BFD

The national controversy over *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* following its first printing in September of 1971 far exceeded the success of Skinner's previous forays into public debates about modern society. BFD became "the year's most controversial bestseller," a multi-million-copy-selling phenomenon that reached number four on the *New York Times* best seller list and went on to enjoy a fourteen week run in this position.[161] It was serialized in both *Psychology Today* and the *New York Post.*

With the publication of BFD the firestorm of debate surrounding Skinner's assertions about human nature and society, and the urgency with which critics rushed to discredit his theories, increased in the early 1970s. There were endless book reviews and extended discussions in numerous mainstream magazines, intellectual journals, and newsletters. Countless philosophers, theologians, scientists, social scientists, journalists,

[161] Quotes are from the jacket of the 1972 paperback edition of BFD (New York: Bantam/Vintage, 1971).

and fellow psychologists weighed in on Skinner's propositions, and Skinner found himself accepting guest spots on many of the major television talk shows and discussion panels of the time.

In a series of articles on BFD for *Psychology Today*, Skinner was described as "one of America's most distinguished psychologists."[162] He had been voted the psychologist most recognized in faculties of psychology at American universities, and also as one of the ten most influential psychologists of all time.[163] The buzz surrounding BFD ultimately earned Skinner a portrait on the cover of *Time* and the lead story for the week of September 20th, 1971 in a year marked by Richard Nixon's price and wage freeze programs (intended to counter an economic downturn, to no avail), intensified fighting in Pakistan and Southeast Asia, and the overall retreat of the counterculture movement.[164] Social decay seemed in these times to be just around the corner.

In the coming years after the first edition, BFD spawned book-length explanations of Skinnerian social philosophy from such prominent philosophers as Tibor Machan and Finley Carpenter.[165] Skinner's views were the subject of numerous academic symposia and conferences around the country and abroad. The book became a bona fide cultural

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[162] Richard Rubenstein, "Beyond Freedom and Dignity," review of *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, by B. F. Skinner, *Psychology Today* 6 (September, 1971): 30-31, 95-97.

[163] T. George Harris, "All the World's a Box," introduction to BFD, *Psychology Today* 5 (August, 1971): 33-35. Similar claims were made by other reviewers. Another reviewer for the *New York Times Book Review* noted that Skinner's peers had judged him the most influential psychologist in America. See the edition for October 24, 1971.

[164] "Skinner's Utopia, Panacea, or Path to Hell?," review of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *Time* 98 (September 20, 1971): 47-53.

[165] Tibor R. Machan, *The Pseudo-Science of B. F. Skinner* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1974); Finley Carpenter, *The Skinner Primer: Behind Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

event. With this, his crowning social manifesto, Skinner tapped directly into the heart of contemporary debates in the early 1970s about how American society seemed utterly to have failed in curbing the rising tide of war, poverty, overpopulation, environmental devastation, and racial tension, even within its own borders. The state of society and the environment during this period, the perception of social decay, brought many to consider more drastic social measures. Skinner's audience was thus primed for his message in a way that their parents had not been in the late 1940s.

Recognized for years as the inventor of the "Skinner box" and the father of programmed instruction, Skinner was now being portrayed as the often embattled but ever compelling *expert* on human behavior, held in awe by an admiring but wary readership.[166] The sheer volume of his credentials, publications, and accomplishments as a "Harvard psychologist," as he was often described, was repeatedly mentioned in articles and reviews of BFD as having added to his reputation as one of America's foremost experts on human behavior. In his publicly acknowledged capacity as a scientific expert, educational revolutionary, and emerging futurist prophet/sage, Skinner came to be regarded by the early 1970s, not merely as the curious inventor of interesting behavioral technology, but as one of the most influential minds of the twentieth century.

His added reputation as one of the most important figures in education helped secure a good portion of Skinner's audience. William Fischer noted in the magazine *Intellect* that the notoriety of Skinner's books had earned him a fellowship at one of the nation's leading think tanks, The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, in

[166] "Brave New Behaviorism," review of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *Newsweek* 78 (September, 20, 1971): 95.

Santa Barbara, CA in 1973.[167] Fischer recounted Skinner's curious intellectual collaborations at the Center with Robert M. Hutchins, a prominent figure in education policy debates and author of the landmark study, *The Higher Learning in America* (1936). An advocate of liberal education, Hutchins was an outspoken critic of Skinner's education theory, which he thought had its origins in pragmatism, love of technology, and Deweyan education theory. Such an alliance of opposites, Fischer noted, said something very significant, however, about Skinner's cultural influence and the apparent willingness of his contemporaries to entertain his methods in light of desperation over America's growing social plight.

By painting a picture of impending disaster for society unless cultural engineers stepped in, the press indulged Skinner's self-promotion. He portrayed himself in public lectures as the kind of scientific advisor now needed by governments to help society gain control of itself. Old systems of reinforcement (i. e., traditional social standards and values), Skinner claimed, had been discarded in a period when standards of work, community, government, and individual behavior had all been severely challenged. This change explained the contemporary descent into the "immediate gratifiers," of drugs and sex.[168] Skinner posed the question that many reviewers and readers of BFD seemed already to chorus at the time. As echoed in one reviewer's quote of Skinner, "Are we free to have a future or are we so committed to the immediate gratifiers that we will never

[167] William Fischer, "Shaping a Better World," *Intellect* 102 (October 19, 1973): 7-8.

[168] Fischer, "Shaping a Better World," 7-8.

allow the redesign of our culture in such a way as to bring the future into account and make it effective?"[169]

Nevertheless, reactions against Skinner and his sterile plan for social regimentation were unsurprisingly numerous. Not much had changed since the publication of *Walden Two* and *Science and Human Behavior* for most of his well-known humanist critics. While most people were willing to acknowledge his scientific accomplishments and status as an expert on human behavior, they found his views too extreme, dogmatic, and dangerous. Many reviewers cited Skinner's overdrawn enthusiasm and faith in science as a panacea for social ills. Skinner presumed, perhaps like other social scientists, that his methodology was the "one best way"[170] to solve social problems. Skinner's seeming tendency toward megalomania was associated with Hitler and the fascist state.[171] How would Skinner or any other scientific expert presume to decide for the populace the good and bad of culture in terms of an evolutionary ethic of survival?

> Skinner links his technology to the prospect of "maximiz[ing] the achievements of which the human organism is capable," but he nowhere tells us how these may be determined. ...Man is a culturally emergent being whose habits and skills are relatively remote adjustments of the physical dispositions of a certain gifted animal.[172]

How was he to deal with cultural diversity, given what in *Walden Two* looked like a fairly rigid social order? Would this be desirable for democracy in social flux? Modern

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[169] Ibid., 8.

[170] I refer here to the book title by Robert Kanigel, *The One Best Way: Frederick Winslow Taylor and the Enigma of Efficiency* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997).

[171] Rubenstein, "Beyond Freedom," 95.

[172] J. Margolis, Review essay of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *Society* 9 (September, 1972): 80-90. See page 86.

culture was evolving in an unknown direction, and Skinner could not possibly know what future would be best.

And what did Skinner really know about human behavior? Many pointed to the naivete of his extrapolations from animal experiments and utopian fantasies. As one reviewer for *Book World* put it,

> From a scientific standpoint, [Skinner] knows almost nothing about human beings...Thus Skinner's prescription for the social ills that ail us must be evaluated, not as the fruit of a scientific understanding of man but on the same basis as *Future Shock*, *The Greening of America*, or any other piece of schlock sociology.[173]

Indeed, even colleagues attested to the fact that Skinner's aspirations toward a 'physics' of cultural engineering fell far short of what could reasonably be expected from social science. "He's just like the rest of us," one psychologist quipped, "pretty spotty."[174] Still and all, most reviewers admitted that, in the end, a compromise between human freedoms and social systems of control had to be struck.

What was of greatest concern to Skinner's contemporaries was BFD's morbidly compelling argument. "Given its topic, the success of Skinner's book -- the manner of its success -- is probably more important than the book itself."[175]

> [T]he important consideration here is not merely whether Skinner has written a good or a bad book,....if Skinner has written a poor and utterly useless book, what are the implications regarding the educated, the cultured, the knowledgeable, the informed readership of the trade book world?[176]

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[173] Robert Clairborn, Review of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *Book World*, October 10, 1971, page 6. Reprinted in *Current* 135 (December, 1971): 9-18. See pages 15-18.

[174] "Brave New Behaviorism," 95.

[175] Margolis, Review essay, 90.

[176] Ibid., 81.

It is worth noting a revealing instance in which the popularity of Skinner's new book attracted the attention of a member of Congress. Democratic representative Cornelius Gallagher of New Jersey entered into the Congressional Record on December 15, 1971 a multi-page lambasting of Skinner in response to a grant of close to $300,000 awarded to Skinner by the National Institute of Mental Health for research into the "Behavioral Analysis of Cultural Practices."[177]

The grant was first awarded in 1964 and had been paid out in installments over the course of eight years. Its purpose was to facilitate further "study [of] the broader implications of an experimental analysis of behavior for government, economics, psychotherapy, sociology, and anthropology, or the relevance of behavioral processes in an analysis of culture."[178] The grant helped finance the research for Skinner's *Technology of Teaching* (1968), *Contingencies of Reinforcement* (1969), and *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971).

Gallagher acknowledged that, as one of the most respected and well-known experts on psychology, Skinner was a scientist to whom Americans paid close attention. "Why should a Member of the Congress rise to discuss one of the most widely read and influential books of the fall 1971 literary season?," Gallaher asked. Because, "[W]hen Dr. Skinner speaks millions of our fellow citizens take him very seriously."[179] In his capacity as head of the Subcommittee on Invasion of Privacy, Congressman Gallagher

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[177] From an article entitled, "Grant K6-MH-21775," in *The Nation* 214 (January 10, 1972): 37. See also an account of the debate, "Misplaced Zeal," *The New Republic* 166 (January 1, 1972): 14.

[178] Excerpt from minutes of Cornelius Gallagher's speech before Congress under the heading, "Federal Funds of $283,000 to Harvard Psychologist B. F. Skinner to write 'Beyond Freedom and Dignity,'" Proceedings and Debates of the 92nd Congress, 1st sess., *Congressional Record of the United States* 117, pt. 36 (December 13, 1971 to December 17, 1971): 47185-47195. See page 47187.

[179] Ibid., 47186.

had for seven years investigated the federal appropriation of funds for social scientific research projects in psychology and sociology. In his estimation these projects reflected very similar attitudes toward human nature and freedom as those expressed in Skinner's BFD. Gallagher highlighted some proposed projects of social control that included among other things psychological tests for all children to determine future criminality, clandestine microphone surveillance in federal housing projects to examine the habits of low-income lifestyles, and mandated psychological testing for all political leaders.

> [W]hat I question is whether he [Skinner] should be subsidized by the Federal Government especially since, in my judgement, he is advancing ideas which threaten the future of our system of government by denigrating the American traditions of individualism, human dignity, and self-reliance."[180]

Gallagher, like many of Skinner's opponents, drew associations between opinions in BFD and what some saw as the general arrogance of social scientists in using invasive and manipulative research techniques, and then presuming to dictate social adjustment and human values according to their own scientific standards.

For the most part, Gallagher believed that social scientists held traditional ideas of human dignity in contempt. Significantly, Gallagher associated Skinner with the overall prevalence of social engineering technology in modern society. The ubiquity of computer information systems and the use of chemicals and drugs to control human behavior (not something that Skinner advocated) came in for particular criticism by Gallagher. Skinner was a symbol of scientism in social administration, of technologies

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[180] Ibid., 47186.

that would destroy humanity in the end and bring about an Orwellian dystopia. Similar sentiments were directed at Skinner by then Vice President Spiro Agnew.[181]

The reaction among "the old Skinner watchers" like Joseph Krutch and Anthony Burgess who had followed Skinner's rise since the 1940s was similar and predictable.[182] What was new, however, were the critiques offered by a younger generation of intellectuals, humanists, and social critics who had come to Skinnerian social theory for the first time in the 1960s. The turbulent and *experimental* atmosphere of the age undoubtedly contributed to the panicked reaction of humanists who, to be sure, feared the appeal of Skinner's theories to a younger generation less familiar with fascism, socialism, and the horrors of war from the 1930s and 40s. Many of these young people had read *Walden Two* in college and seen its humanistic potential.[183] Skinner had also forged a scientific school of thought in behavioral engineering and programmed learning that boasted ardent supporters in academia and industry. This was hard to ignore, especially for those like Gallagher and the humanists who saw that behaviorism in one form or

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[181] See comments on Agnew's pronouncements in W. Joseph Wyatt, "Behavioral Science in the Crosshairs: The FBI File on B. F. Skinner," *Behavior and Social Issues* 10 (2000): 101-109, especially page 108. See also Skinner's original comments, as Wyatt indicates, in *A Matter of Consequences*, page 323.

[182] Walter Arnold, Review of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *Saturday Review* 54 (October 9, 1971): 47-48. See also the comments in Alexandra Rutherford, "B. F. Skinner's Technology of Behavior," page 12, where Rutherford claims a broad "societal shift toward humanism" in the 1960s by citing the views of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Howard Zinn, and Theodore Roszak in characterizing the whole of American culture. These authors had unmistakable political agendas in their characterizations of American culture in the 1960s. Rutherford, however, seems to imply that their polemics represent American society as a whole. I suspect that many American historians would disagree with this assessment.

[183] James E. Royce, "The Psychology and Politics of Freedom and Dignity," review of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *America* 125 (October 23, 1971): 323-24.

another had infiltrated all aspects of organized social activity.[184] They had failed in the end to squelch the continued interest in Skinnerian social theory and social science.

Indeed despite vehement criticism, or perhaps because of it, Skinner's vision received public endorsement, if not approval, as a plausible depiction of the present and future, one that very much needed to be addressed seriously. One reviewer noted that, while BFD might not contain the best solution to social problems, it nevertheless needed thorough consideration at the very least, because of its timely warnings about the danger of continuing on the current societal path. As such,

> [e]very social studies teacher should not only read the book, but study it, fight through it, try to understand what Skinner is saying. As [Skinner] points out, a science of behavior is more advanced than many of its critics realize. It is impossible to deny that our culture is in danger of self-destruction. We must face the fact that our efforts to date have not worked.[185]

As I have argued, this tension and anxiety about the implications of BFD stemmed from what was in the late 1960s and early 1970s a real and growing pessimism about humanity, one that emphasized its cold, brutal, and inherently malevolent tendencies. Nuclear weapons proliferation, environmental devastation, prolonged warfare, overpopulation and other social ills had reached global proportions.[186] The failure of social programs to counteract the deleterious effects of mass culture had fallen short in the immediate postwar period.

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[184] Harris, *Psychology Today*, 33; George Kateb, "Toward a Worldless World," *Atlantic Monthly* 228 (October, 1971): 122-25.

[185] Jack L. Nelson, "On B. F. Skinner," review of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *Social Education* 36 (March, 1972): 314-15.

[186] David C. Anderson, "Man and His Environment," review of BFD, by B. F. Skinner, *Current* 135 (December, 1971): 9-18.

In the end, as many had surmised, the unsettling import of Skinner's manifesto was his undeniable acknowledgement of social and technocratic trends in American culture that substantiated his claims for this pessimistic view of self and society. As Lewis Mumford, among many others, noted in his book, *The Pentagon of Power* (1964), large-scale technocratic culture already utilized intricate systems of social control. This had given rise to a new species of human, William H. Whyte Jr.'s "Organization Man," an individual who oriented his personal and professional life around the corporate and bureaucratic organizations that systematized every aspect of life.[187] Mumford also drew a direct link between the emergence of this individual and the advent of Skinnerian-style technologies.

> Organization Man, then, can be defined briefly as that part of the human personality whose further potentialities for life and growth have been suppressed for the purpose of controlling those fractional energies that are left, and feeding them into a mechanically ordered collective system.[...] Consider B. F. Skinner's learning machine. Such programmed pseudo-education is in fact the perfect instrument for political absolutism, and the general acceptance of this system would be fatal to the exercise of independent judgement, critical dissent, or critical thought.[...] Our contemporaries are already so conditioned to accept technological 'progress' as absolute and irresistible, however painful, ugly, mentally cramping, or physiologically damaging its results, that they accept the latest technical offering, whether a supersonic plane or a 'learning cell,' with smiling consent, particularly if the equipment is accompanied by a 'scientific' explanation and seems technologically an 'advanced' type. [188]

The old view of autonomous humanity, it seemed, had long since been outmoded by the realities of a technocratic existence. For many observers, science and technology had

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[187] Whyte, *The Organization Man.*

[188] Lewis Mumford, *The Pentagon of Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), 277, 285, 286.

redefined, as William Whyte and C. Wright Mills would later observe, the culture and the self.[189]

Americans had already absorbed the basic methodology of neo-behaviorism in social practice by emphasizing the role of environment in all aspects of life. It had been upheld as well in the biological and social sciences, absorbing technologies like the teaching machine and the computer as templates of human behavior.[190] As one commentator for *Life* magazine put it in a review entitled, "How to Make People Behave," BFD was regarded as "a book of extraordinary intellectual power that attacks a whole herd of sacred cows. Skinner is on to something of great importance. We are what we do. We become as we behave."[191] Further,

> In his compacted way Skinner tells us where we seem to be going and why. We've obviously started: teaching machines and Head Start, managed economy and social welfare. Ahead are regulated birth rates (which mean genetic control) and more sophisticated forms of operant conditioning in schools.[192]

Skinner had simply outlined a plan for social engineering whose architecture and epistemology was already in place. He argued that it was high time to put sound scientific management to work. His was the response of America's most prominent psychologist of the early 1970s to the terrible predicament of humanity.

> Skinner says nothing new about the danger. We're exhausting our food and fuel supplies, reproducing at a suicidal rate, poisoning the atmosphere,

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[189] Rubenstein, *Psychology Today*, 30.

[190] William H. Fischer, "Strange Bedfellows: Hutchins and Skinner," *Intellect* 101 (1973): 243-44. See page 243.

[191] Webster Schott, "How to Make People Behave," *Life* 71 (October 22, 1971): 18.

[192] Ibid.

> turning the land into a graveyard. Nuclear holocaust is available if all else fails. Or we can smoke, drink, or drug ourselves to death.[193]

Skinner put the challenge to his readers to face up to the stark realities of their modern existence. Humanity either had to relinquish traditional views of individual freedom and human dignity and confront human nature head-on, or face extinction. In this sentiment Skinner echoed many other social experts of his generation. Skinner's solution, at least to some, "sound[ed] likely because we've thought of nothing more solid."[194]

Conclusion

In the end many of his critics believed that in history Skinner would share company with the great minds of Western science who had fundamentally reoriented humanity's sense of place in nature and society. "After Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud," one commentator for the *New Catholic World* asserted, "Skinner's aim is to deal the final blow to the narcissistic anthropomorphism of man, ...".[195] Skinner's influence as a psychologist was regularly compared to that of Sigmund Freud. Just as Freud had asserted that human nature is defined both by hereditary/evolutionary endowment *and* by environment, Skinner's behaviorist manifesto in BFD conveyed a similar message to a generation living in a technocratic society.[196] "After Freud came Skinner. After Skinner, ...?", queried one reviewer for *Life* magazine.[197]

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[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid.

[195] James E. Loder, "Secularized Calvinism: B. F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*," Review feature in *New Catholic World* 215 (January, 1972): 11, 36-37. See page 11.

[196] Willard Gaylin, "Skinner Redux: The Seductive Attempt to Engineer a Better Man," *Harper's Magazine* 247 (December, 1973): 48-56. See page 54.

> The neo-behaviorist, B. F. Skinner, is unquestionably one of the most influential individuals in the circles of American education. Some would go so far as to say that he is actually one of the most powerful persons in American society. Surely with the emphasis today upon various kinds of "game plans and contingencies," upon "input and feedback," and upon all of the lexicon which has been borrowed from the computer specialists, there may be little doubt that, in its various manifestations, neo-behaviorism virtually has *taken over our society*. Whether this is largely the work of Skinner, or whether he simply symbolizes a trend, is relatively unimportant. The reality of our situation – for good or for ill -- is what matters.[198]

This statement is perhaps one of the best contemporary appraisals of Skinner's career as a scientific social expert in the postwar decades. His models of human behavior had been drawn from those deterministic and mechanistic conceptions of humanity and society that reflected broader trends in modern urbanization and technocratic expansion. With his depictions of *behavioral* humanity, the reviewer observed, Skinner had worked to reify scientifically the machine image of human nature already familiar to moderns. In a technocratic world, behaviorism and scientism, it appeared to many, had become the rule of order, and Skinner served as advocate and spokesman.

The sales of BFD did not therefore represent a popular embrace of Skinnerian social theory by any means. The controversy among the Skinner watchers and those who eventually read the book was over whether or not Skinner's was the only alternative to social collapse. The flood of criticism surrounding BFD represents Skinner's exacerbation of anxieties about what to do with the self at a time in the early 1970s when it seemed as if human social institutions were in decline.

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[197] Webster Schott, "How to Make People Behave," 18.

[198] William H. Fischer, "Strange Bedfellows: Hutchins and Skinner," *Intellect* 101 (January, 1973): 243-44. See page 243. Italics mine.

In a new era defined by the issues of poverty, urban strife, technocracy, political protest, environmentalism, and war, a new generation of young Americans absorbed Skinnerian ideology with an eye toward radical solutions to human problems. Skinner's intellectual critics continued to portray Skinner in the 1960s and 70s as a dyed-in-the-wool Orwellian, prognosticating the inevitability of scientific meritocracy. But younger readers of *Walden Two* discovered, or at least thought they saw, a curious Skinnerian style of humanism and an attention to traditional values of community, self-fulfillment, stewardship of the environment, and the value of what some clearly saw as a 'technology of counterculture.'

Yet as with Taylor at the turn of the century, there were just as many others who felt a sense of urgency in downplaying Skinner's social theories in a culture lured by similar visions of technocratic salvation. It is little wonder then, given this, and given the central role that the social sciences came to play in debates about future society in the postwar era, that social scientists like Skinner were recognized as important participants in the public debate about how to build the 'Great Society,' to use Lyndon Johnson's terminology. Americans, however, had never lived in a fully Taylorized/Skinnerized environment, bound body and soul to the thralldom of the system. Human behavioral technology occupied many cultural spaces, but it was never fully embraced in the manner of the fictional Walden Two community. As in Taylor's time, mechanistic approaches to the self were counterbalanced by the desire among many scientists, philosophers, and members of the public at large to retain an image of the self that was not devoid of autonomy, mentality, or individual uniqueness. Indeed, there were many humanists in the ranks of the social sciences, such as Margaret Mead, who offered a different vision of

social engineering and reform during the postwar decades, and who utilized an entirely different set of scientific assumptions about human nature and potential. They too participated in the national debates about the future of humankind, and it is to one of the most famous of that number that we turn next.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPANDING POTENTIALITIES: CULTURE, PERSONALITY, AND MEADIAN THEORIES OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL REFORM

If we once grasp the meaning of foreign cultures in this manner, we shall also be able to see how many of our lines of behavior that we believe to be founded deep in human nature are actually expressions of our culture and subject to modification with changing culture. Not all our standards are categorically determined by our quality as human beings, but may change with changing circumstances. It is our task to discover among all the varieties of human behavior those that are common to all humanity. By a study of the universality and variety of cultures anthropology may help us to shape the future course of mankind.

Franz Boas, *The Aims of Anthropological Research (1932)*[1]

So we may say that power directed towards persons, ... given by the knowledge of the springs of human conduct, can fit a man only for control within a fascist state. ... On the basis of a scientific knowledge of culture and human behavior we can say that the power to control individual human behavior and the exercise of such power are incompatible with human freedom. By recognizing that circumstance, by voluntarily trying our own hand and laying a solemn injunction upon our ardent imaginations, we become able to use the control that science has given us to set future generations free.

Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry (1942)*[2]

Regardless of academic controversy in recent decades over the original studies of Samoan culture that brought Margaret Mead to fame in the 1930s, her contributions to American anthropology have profoundly influenced generations of anthropologists.[3] In

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[1] From Franz Boas, "The Aims of Anthropological Research," in *Race, Language, and Culture* (New York: The Free Press, 1940), 243-59. See page 259. This article is a transcript of Boas's presidential address to American Association for the Advancement of Science, Atlantic City, December, 1932. See this address in *Science* N. C., 76 (1932): 605-13.

[2] Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* (New York: Morrow, 1942), 192.

[3] There are many indications in the professional literature in anthropology that Mead's influence among cultural anthropologists remains strong. For a retrospective of her accomplishments in anthropology, see the series of articles in a commemorative edition of *American Anthropologist* 82 (1980), especially articles by Rhoda Metraux, "The Study of Culture at a Distance: A Prototype," 362-72; "Margaret Mead: A Biographical Sketch," 262-69. Other articles on Mead in the same volume include: Francis L. K. Hsu, "Margaret Mead and Psychological Anthropology," 349-55; Peggy R. Sanday, "Margaret Mead's View of Sex Roles in Her Own and Other Societies," 340-48; Mary C. Bateson, "Continuities in Insight and Innovation: Toward a Biography of Margaret Mead," 270-77. Also see the biographical perspectives by

part because of her tremendous success in bringing cultural anthropology into the public eye, anthropologists today continue to evaluate her legacy and debate her place in the profession.[4] Mead used her pioneering approach to culture studies not only to challenge traditional American concepts of personality and individual psychology but also to critique the discipline of anthropology itself. She believed that anthropology often had failed to address the psychological and social aspects of cultural analysis, particularly with regard to how the researcher and the subject each contributed to depictions of culture as a whole. In her career as a scientist and public intellectual in the postwar decades, Mead promoted the "science of culture" as the key to social reform in American society.

Like Skinner, Mead achieved a level of popular recognition that few social scientists ever enjoyed. Mead's public persona as the "grandmother" to the postwar generation was felt more deeply among Americans, especially younger Americans, who were exploring cultural alternatives actively in the 1960s.[5] Mead's invocation of social

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friends and colleagues published in a special memorial issue of *American Anthropologist* entitled "In Memoriam: Margaret Mead (1901-1978)," *American Anthropologist* 82 (1980): 261-373. On the long-standing controversy surrounding her work in Samoa see the original criticisms by Derek Freeman in his book, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983). For an overview of the debates see Lowell Holmes, *Quest for the Real Samoa: The Mead/Freeman Controversy and Beyond* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, Pub., 1987). More recent publications on Mead/Freeman debate include Derek Freeman, *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead: A Historical Analysis of Her Samoan Research* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Martin Orans, *Not Even Wrong: Margaret Mead, Derek, Freeman, and the Samoans* (Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp, 1996); Paul Shankman, "The History of Samoan Sexual Conduct and the Mead-Freeman Controversy," *American Anthropologist* 98 (1996): 555-67.

[4] Lenora Foerstel, "Margaret Mead: From A Cultural-Historical Perspective," *Central Issues in Anthropology* 8 (1988): 25-35. Also see the essays in *Confronting the Margaret Mead Legacy: Scholarship, Empire, and the South Pacific*, ed. Lenora Foerstel and Angela Gilliam (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

[5] This characterization of Mead in the early 1970s was not uncommon. A particular instance was in a poem composed for Mead as part of a tribute ceremony at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. See Vivien Leone, "Margaret Mead: Coming of Age at the Met," *Manhattan Tribune* 2, no. 37 (August 8,

scientific expertise to address the everyday problems of living, working, and raising families in light of broad transformations in American culture, was similar to Skinner's. But her decidedly humanistic approach to society and the individual, and her steadfast support of American democracy, stood in contrast to Skinner's perspective. By the early 1970s Mead was also better known than Skinner.

Unlike Skinner's dehumanizing, neo-behavioral view of the self and society, Mead's perspective upheld the epistemology of "progressive functionalism," a novel approach to cultural analysis in the 1920s advocated by anthropologists Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, among others.[6] Whereas earlier anthropological analysis had entailed the historical reconstruction of cultures using 'armchair' theories of social evolution, Boas and Benedict advocated studying culture directly through the lens of the individual. This methodology eschewed established typologies and classifications and focused on the dynamic interaction between individuals and groups. Mead also preferred an

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1970): 5. Other instances include an obituary published upon her death in 1978 that was similarly titled "Grandmother to the World," *New York Times* (November 16, 1978): A26.

[6] I borrow this characterization of Boasian functionalism from Rosalind Rosenberg. See her chapter on Mead, "Beyond Separate Spheres," in *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 207-37. As George Stocking has noted, the idea of 'culture' had gradually taken on relativistic connotations by the early decades of the twentieth century, having earlier been associated with the social evolutionary and Spencerian theories of the Victorian era. Both Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas argued that human personality and mentality were culturally, rather than biologically, determined. Boas in particular argued for a new functional approach to cultural analysis that combined the study of social institutions with that of individuals, as well as the relationships between them. Boasian theory in this regard influenced a new generation of anthropologists in the American tradition, including Gregory Bateson, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead. The association of specific cultural contexts with the formation of human personality was featured prominently in their work. For more on the development of the 'culture and personality' rubric and of psychological anthropology in American anthropology, see *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality*, *History of Anthropology Series*, vol. 4, ed. George Stocking (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986). For more on the development of functionalist theory in anthropology, see Stocking's own essays in *Functionalism Historicized: Essays on British Social Anthropology*, *History of Anthropology Series*, vol. 2 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

interdisciplinary approach to research, using psychology to evaluate individual members of a culture, sociology to study kinship, and anthropology to study social patterns.

Mead's training in science had been influenced by progressivism and the idea of scientific social management. Unlike Skinner's behaviorism, which had its roots in Taylor-like science and technocracy, Mead's comparative cultural anthropology was born of humanistic approaches to the self. Those strains of progressivism that were people-centered instead of factory inspired were part of the liberal democratic perspective in social science that Mead and her colleagues championed. Their conceptualizations of the self stressed the importance of the individual and his/her potential for growth and change on emotional, intellectual, and moral levels.[7] By *human potential* Mead meant the untapped adaptive capacity of the individual to expand his/her psychological and social worldview, and thereby chart new patterns of living.

Out of Mead's early anthropological research in the 1920s and 30s came her conviction that cultures could be redesigned to handle rapid social and technological change. Seeking the support of government and military agencies in the 1940s, Mead participated in the wartime study of morale and national character, the food habits of Americans, and the cultural conditions that produced human aggression.[8] From these

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[7] See John L. Recchiuti, "The Origins of American Progressivism: New York's Social Science Community, 1880-1917" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1992).

[8] Research by Carleton Mabee has shed light on Mead's efforts to mobilize anthropology and social science for service in the war effort and the concomitant debates over the responsibility of social scientists to the public in the making of public policy. See Carleton Mabee, "Margaret Mead and Behavioral Scientists in World War II: Problems in Responsibility Truth, and Effectiveness," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 23 (1987): 3-13. Mead and Benedict also contributed to psychological warfare operations in the OSS. For an overview of social scientists and their participation in psychological warfare see Eleanor Sparagana, "The Conduct and Consequences of Psychological Warfare: American Psychological Warfare Operations in the War Against Japan, 1941-1945" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1990).

researches came two important works -- *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (1942), a study of American national character, and a text edited by Mead and Rhoda Metraux, *The Study of Culture At a Distance* (1953), which described the skills, methodologies, models, and multi-disciplinary resources needed for the study of "national character."[9] Mead pioneered the study of national character -- the assessment of cultural patterns in relation to individual character -- and promoted it as an important tool for defense planning and for both foreign and domestic policy design in the postwar international environment.[10] Mead also advocated both interdisciplinary social science and cross-cultural social analysis in order to foster understanding and communication between nations, and to study American social patterns.[11]

Unlike Skinner's technologies of behavioral modification, however, Mead's scientific wares were of a conceptual and methodological variety, exploiting techniques from psychology and psychotherapy in evaluating the behavior of individuals in cultures.

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[9] See Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist looks at America* (New York: Morrow, 1942) and *The Study of Culture At a Distance*, ed. Mead and Rhoda Metraux (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). The study of national character developed out of earlier anthropological traditions in culture and personality studies. Mead defined it as an attempt to evaluate and understand how individual personalities reflect certain regularities and patterns of the larger culture, or in this case, the nation-state. More specifically, the study of national character began with, as Mead states, an "attempt to delineate how the innate properties of human beings, the idiosyncratic elements in each human being, and the general and individual patterns of human maturation are integrated within a shared social tradition in such a way that certain regularities appear in the behavior of all members of the culture which can be described as a culturally regular character." For an extended discussion of national character, see Margaret Mead, "National Character," in *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*, ed. A. L. Kroeber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). Ruth Benedict also published studies of national character. See Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1946). Mead and Rhoda Metraux continued their research into national character and cross-cultural studies in the late 1940s in their work with the Research in Contemporary Cultures project at Columbia University. For an account, see Rhoda Metraux, "The Study of Culture at a Distance: A Prototype," *American Anthropologist* 82 (1980): 362-72.

[10] Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "Science, Democracy, and Ethics: Mobilizing Culture and Personality for World War II," in Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and* Others, 184-217.

[11] See Rhoda Metraux's account of Mead's work in the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures research group in her article, "The Study of Culture at a Distance: A Prototype."

Mead had approached the Second World War scientifically, viewing it as a 'laboratory of culture' ripe with possibilities for research and application. The war presented Mead with the opportunity to tailor projects in cultural analysis to military interests and to postwar planners in government. Mead's promotional campaigns, and her status as an advisor to various government agencies, saw her participation in numerous wartime committees.

Mead came through the war years also having furthered her reputation as a scientific expert. As with other aspiring experts such as Benjamin Spock and B. F. Skinner, Mead capitalized on a wave of public interest in the social sciences in the following decade by promoting her strategies of community, family, and individual adjustment to postwar America.[12] Her studies of American culture gave way to an extensive series of publications, commentaries, and symposia that explored changes in family life, social roles for men and women, child rearing practices, and public education.

Mead's tremendously successful and widely read book, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (1949),[13] was one of her most important contributions to the postwar dialogue among social scientists, intellectuals and critics about changes in American living patterns. Mead argued that, with the steady disintegration of the rural American culture model, there came more pressure on the "nuclear family" to function without the traditional community networks that had

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[12] See, for example, the discussions of the public interest in social science in Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture and the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) and William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).

[13] Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: Morrow, 1949).

provided for its basic needs. These networks were being replaced by bureaucratic social service agencies, institutionalized education, and mass culture.[14] Changes in traditional gender roles also were transforming the American family. Sharing responsibility for family maintenance was crucial, Mead argued, for the survival of the family unit in the postwar decades. Children, moreover, whose sense of belonging and individual identity was defined by their early experiences in the family, would need to learn more about how to adapt to a culture in flux.[15] In a variety of publications that ranged from the *American Anthropologist* to the *Ladies Home Journal* in the 1950s, Mead made these points repeatedly. As with other prominent scientists-turned-social experts, Mead sought to provide direction, encouragement, and hope to an anxious and unsure public, much as Benjamin Spock had done for parents with such manuals as *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946).[16]

Margaret Mead's career as a public intellectual, however, has not been given its fair due in our historical appraisals. Numerous personal and professional biographies of Mead attest to her status as a well-known public icon famous for her opinions on

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[14] For more on the history of the family in America, see the following: Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Maxine Baca Zinn and D. Stanley Eitzen, *Diversity in American Families* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); Michael Gordon, ed., *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's, 1983); and Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

[15] See Margaret Mead, *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation -- Manus, 1928-1953* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1956). Mead's study of the Manus people of the Admiralty Islands and their adaptation to rapid social and technological change within one generation furthered her conviction that American culture held great promise for social progress. At least from Mead's perspective, the ability of the Manus to make adjustments to modernization in a nonviolent fashion was evidence that rapid social change in a culture need not be a liability. The ability to adapt and change to new conditions was characteristic of American culture, Mead argued, and was one of our greatest strengths.

[16] Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1946).

American family life, child rearing, education, and gender.[17] Biographer Jane Howard, for example, has described Mead as a "common sense" social commentator who was accessible and personable. Mead's authority came from her image as a sympathetic, hands-on scientist.[18] Robert Cassidy has pointed also to Mead's talent as a social analyst in her anticipation of 1960s social unrest. As Cassidy argues, the public saw Mead as a scientist who was 'with the times' in the 1960s and early 70s. Rosalind Rosenberg has gone perhaps the furthest historically in recent years in studying Mead's professional heritage in progressive era reform ideology, going so far as to describe Mead as a "progressive social engineer," who firmly believed in the power of social science to remake society.[19] What we do not have, however, is an extended assessment of Mead's impact on contemporary debates about the self in postwar America. Given her public recognition in American culture, there has been a surprising paucity of discussion about Mead's contributions to social reform debates after World War Two. Mead's daughter and biographer, Mary Catherine Bateson, has observed that her participation in social

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[17] Jane Howard has contributed perhaps the most comprehensive and useful popular biography thus far on Mead's life and work in her book, *Margaret Mead: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984). Other biographies of Mead's early research and her association with husbands and colleagues Reo Fortune and Gregory Bateson include Edward Rice, *Margaret Mead: A Portrait* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979). For a more intimate account of Mead's career as anthropologist and parent, see the biography by her daughter, Mary C. Bateson, *With A Daughter's Eye: A Memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson* (New York: W. Morrow, 1984). For autobiographical accounts, see Margaret Mead, *Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years* (New York: W. Morrow, 1972) and her self-titled article in *History of Psychology in Autobiography*, vol. 6, ed. Gardner Lindzey (New York: Prentice Hall, 1974), 295-326. Robert Cassidy has provided an extended overview of Mead's opinions on the American family, child development, and other facets of American culture in his book, *Margaret Mead: A Voice for the Century* (New York: Universe Books, 1982). Perhaps the best chapter-length discussion of Mead's academic and public activities is provided by Rosalind Rosenberg. See Rosalind Rosenberg, "Beyond Separate Spheres," in *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 207-37.

[18] Howard, *Margaret Mead*, 289.

[19] Rosenberg, *Separate Spheres*, 237.

discourse on these and other issues has yet to be addressed adequately. Bateson has called for a sociological analysis of Mead's career in its proper historical context.[20]

Steps toward a cultural history of Margaret Mead in America have been taken recently by the anthropologist and cultural historian, Micaela di Leonardo.[21] Addressing the popular reception of American science in the postwar era, Leonardo has argued that Mead's ethnographies and those of other anthropologists of her generation are particularly important scholarly venues for understanding the "commodification" of American science in the twentieth century. Leonardo contends that Mead, whom she calls the "genus Anthropologicus to the public" in the postwar decades, has "swamped all other anthropologists, even most scholars, in public sphere recognition."[22] Mead was foremost among human science experts such as Skinner and Spock who crafted marketable perspectives on human nature for popular consumption.[23] Discussion of the Mead phenomenon is thus paramount in understanding the American construction of what Leonardo calls the postwar American 'self,' an idea of the individual that was shaped by new social realities.[24] Di Leonardo has stressed the importance of examining a scientist's own personal and professional aspirations, philosophies, political beliefs, and attitudes in evaluating their work and their public career. This is paramount, she claims, in any true assessment of their cultural impact. Curiously, however, di Leonardo does

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[20] Mary Catherine Bateson, *With a Daughter's Eye: A Memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson* (New York: Morrow, 1984), 198.

[21] Micaela di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[22] Ibid., 362.

[23] Ibid., 17.

[24] Ibid., 9-16.

not discuss Mead's thoughts on broader social reforms very extensively. In this and the following chapter I will examine Mead's reform agendas and their appropriation by different sectors of the American public.

In the present chapter I will concentrate almost exclusively on the evolution of Margaret Mead's cultural anthropology and social theories both before and during the Second World War, and in the decade after it. Her efforts as an advocate of social science in service of democracy (in contrast to Skinner's), and as a proponent of interdisciplinary research that celebrated the diversity of human potential, will also be examined. Mead's depictions of primitive peoples, as well as her examination of the changing roles of women, the structure of the family, and the importance of proper child rearing and education, will be addressed with regard to the experiences of Americans during the late 1940s and early 50s.

In the first part of this discussion I will address Mead's early explorations into the predictive potential of the concept of "national character." The study of national social behavior through the psychology of individuals was a method that Mead tried unsuccessfully to promote in military planning and domestic policy circles during the Second World War. Similar to Skinner's attempts at 'war science' projects, Mead's research into such things as American and enemy morale, the strategic impact of American food consumption habits, and possible methods of psychological warfare illustrate her hope that war mobilization would benefit social science as a whole. The full delineation of national character studies and a "science of culture," would come later with the publication of her edited volume *The Study of Culture at a Distance* in 1953.[25] This

[25] Skinner published *Science and Human Behavior* in the same year. It contained his outline for a science of culture as well.

text summarized the research techniques that Mead and her colleagues used to study the national character of several enemy nations during the war.[26]

Secondly, I will examine Mead's evaluation of American national character in her book, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* (1942). This work demonstrates the centrality of child development studies and educational reform in Mead's (and Skinner's) postwar social reform agenda.[27] Mead's call for national implementation of community agencies to administer these reforms on the American front is indicated, for example, in her endorsement of the British social services system in the late 1940s. Mead felt that the British model struck the proper balance between scientific administrative oversight and community participation.

With *And Keep Your Powder Dry* I will argue also that, much as in Skinner's fictional utopia, *Walden Two* (1946), Mead was intent on building a comprehensive theory of social reform. Her embrace of an open, democratic society as a prerequisite for social progress, however, stood in stark contrast to Skinner's claim that democracy had become obsolete as a system of social management. Moreover, just as Skinner's technocratic model of society reflected his mechanistic view of the self, Mead's vision of professional social science in service of democracy mirrored her faith in the untapped potentialities of the holistic, dynamic, culture-bound self. Mead's widely popular study of American middle class culture, families, and the changing dynamics of gender roles in *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* in 1949 covered many of the issues that were uppermost in the minds of Americans. As in Skinner's own

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[26] Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux, *The Study of Culture at a Distance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953).

appraisals, Mead's books revealed the aspirations of professional social scientists to build their public authority by providing scientific expertise to a public seeking guidance.

Finally, I will end this chapter with an interlude that compares Mead's and Skinner's use of evolutionary concepts in constructing their respective visions of the self and society. The concept of *adaptation* in the postwar decades came to dominate not only the biological and human sciences but also much of the popular discourse among scientists and social critics about social change. As I argue, this concept and the discourses on change influenced how Mead and Skinner each would construct and deploy their concepts of *human adaptive potential.* Whereas Skinner employed a theory of human potential that was highly manipulative and deterministic, Mead's vision of the active self left room for the individual to take part in shape his/her adaptive capacities.

'National Character' as an Organizing Concept in Cultural Anthropology

Mead's concept of national character had its roots in American cultural anthropology and the theories of Franz Boas. In contrast to classic nineteenth-century physical anthropology, which emphasized the study of artifacts and linguistics, as well as Spencerian social evolution, cultural anthropology centered on the study of present-day cultural phenomena. Direct contact with primitive societies through fieldwork was essential in gaining a true understanding of the social structure, kinship, language, and psychology of a culture. Cultural anthropology thus lent itself to connections with other social sciences such as psychology and sociology because of its focus on real-time social interactions. Indeed, from its inception in the British, American, and European

[27] Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry.*

anthropological traditions in the opening decades of the twentieth century, the human sciences benefited considerably from the disciplinary cross-fertilization that cultural anthropology provided.[28] In subsequent decades it contributed to the birth of hybrid fields such as culture and personality studies, psychological anthropology, ethno-psychology, and most recently, ethno-history. It also contributed to personality psychology in the 1930s and 40s.[29]

Cultural anthropology saw its most important period of development during the interwar period in America and Europe, with Boas drawing inspiration from the British functional anthropologists, Bronislaw Malinowski and Augustus Pitt-Rivers.[30] Functionalism, another school of cultural anthropology, stressed a comprehensive evaluation of each culture's unique interpersonal dynamics. Functionalism also emphasized the special role of individuals -- their behavior, character, psychology, and

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[28] For an overview of the scientific reception of cultural anthropology in America see George Stocking, "The Scientific Reaction Against Cultural Anthropology, 1917-1920," in *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, ed. George Stocking (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 270-307. On the divergence between British and American anthropology in the 1920s see George Stocking, "The Ethnographic Sensibility of the 1920s and the Dualism of the Anthropological Tradition," in *Romantic Motives: Essays on anthropological Sensibility*, ed. George Stocking (Madison, WI: University of Madison Press, 1989), 208-76.

[29] For an overview of the history of culture theory see Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001). For the history of the development of psychological anthropology see Charles Lindholm, *Culture and Identity: The History, Theory, and Practice of Psychological Anthropology* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001); John M. Ingham, *Psychological Anthropology Reconsidered* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). On the development of ethnopsychology see Roy G. D'Andrade, *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For an example of ethnohistorical surveys see *Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History*, ed. Jay O'Brien and William Roseberry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)

[30] The rival British school of structuralism was headed by A. Radcliff Brown who was more concerned with deciphering the 'system of culture' in order to explain its particulars through the use of linguistics and complex mathematical models. For more on the influence of Malinowski on the American anthropological tradition see George W. Stocking, "Anthropology and the Science of the Irrational: Malinowski's Encounter with Freudian Psychoanalysis," in Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others*, 13-49. For more on Augustus H. L. F. Pitt-Rivers and British ethnology see Mark Bowden, *Pitt-Rivers: The Life and Archeological Work of Lieutenant-General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, DCL, FRS, FSA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

interaction in groups -- in understanding the broader parameters of social structure. This perspective broke with the physical anthropology tradition and was inspired by the incorporation of Freudian psychology into ethnography, and by its utility in mapping kinship systems. Malinowski and Rivers used Freud's Oedipal and sexuality theories, and his theory of repression, in order to understand the influences of culture on individual character. As the historian Jeremy MacClancy has noted, however, because of the decidedly empirical bent of British social anthropology, the "speculative" psychoanalytic aspects of early British functionalism were later marginalized. American cultural anthropologists on the other hand embraced the psychological and sociological elements of cultural anthropology. They became part of the 'high era' of American culture and personality studies and the national character concept in the 1930s.[31]

As George Stocking observed, the rise of the "culture and personality" rubric in American anthropology in the late 1920s and early 30s was part of an attempt by Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Edward Sapir, and the psychologist Abram Kardiner at Columbia University to dismantle the racial and psychic determinism of nineteenth-century social evolutionary theory.[32] *Cultural* determinism was the hallmark

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[31] Jeremy MacClancy, "Unconventional Character and Disciplinary Convention: John Layard, Jungian and Anthropologist," in George Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, 50-71. See page 67.

[32] For an overview of the major conceptual trends leading to the rise of the culture and personality rubric in the 1930s see the introduction in George Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, 1-12. See also Regna Darnell, "Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and the Americanist Text Tradition," *Historiographia Linguistica* 17 (1990): 129-44. For a seminal work by Abram Kardiner, see his book, *The Individual and His Society: The Psychodynamics of Primitive Social Organization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939). For modern analysis of Kardiner see William C. Manson, *The Psychodynamics of Culture: Abram Kardiner and Neo-Freudian Anthropology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988). For primary resources on Sapir see *The Psychology of Culture: A Course of Lectures*, ed. Judith T. Irvine and Edward Sapir (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994). For a modern appraisal see Regna Darnell, "Personality and Culture: The Fate of Sapirian Alternative," in Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, 156-83.

of Boasian anthropology.[33] Comparative studies of primitive cultures challenged traditional Western concepts of gender, family structure, community, and morality.[34] Their researches also gave way to new concepts of personality and the self. As Stocking noted, comparative cultural analysis revealed many possible conceptualizations of the individual. A dynamic concept of personality as an ongoing *process*, a manner of "self-actualization," where the unique contexts of the social environment fundamentally defined individual identity and personality, undermined Western ideals of the individual (Puritanical self-restraint and moral rigidity). The Boasians, particularly Mead and Benedict, mixed culture/personality studies with social reform ideology in critiquing American attitudes about race and gender.[35]

It became clear to the Boasians that new perspectives on patterns of personality and culture could replace theories of biological and socio-economic determinism in the physical anthropology tradition. Mead had suggested in her highly popular surveys of

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[33] Jeremy MacClancy, "Unconventional Character," 43.

For an extended evaluation of the Freudian influence on American anthropology see Joan Mark, *Four Anthropologists: An American Science in its Early Years* (New York: Science History Publication, 1980). For more on the development of the Boasian anthropological tradition in humanistic anthropology, and Boas as a psychological anthropologist, see the set of essays entitled "Boasian Culturalism," in George Stocking, *Delimiting Anthropology: Occasional Essays and Reflections* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 1-76 and Stocking, "Anthropology as Kulturkampf...Science and Politics in the Career of Franz Boas," in *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology*, ed. Stocking (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 92-113.

[34] It is important to note here that the Boasians departed from British functionalism in this regard. With its emphasis on relativism and the singular uniqueness of each culture, British functionalism did not invite comparisons between primitive cultures.

[35] Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others*, 1-12. It should be noted that Ruth Benedict played a particularly important role in introducing culture and personality studies to the rest of the American anthropological community with her book *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934). Benedict's studies in cultural psychology emphasized the utility of using Gestalt theory and other techniques in psychoanalysis to study culture through the lens of individual psychology. For a biography of Benedict see Margaret M. Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in this Land* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). For more on the professional lives and friendship between Mead and Benedict see the recent biography, Hilary Lapsley, *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

primitive culture in the 1930s and 40s that the institution of the family, for example, could be modified to counteract destructive cultural traditions that might result collectively in authoritarian and fascist societies. Mead had learned from her research that only through a *comparative* knowledge of how social roles were defined in different cultures did the anthropologist understand patterns of culture and individual character.

> At the present time [1928] we live in a period of transition. We have many standards but we still believe that only one standard can be the right one. We present to our children the picture of a battle-field where each group is fully armoured in a conviction of the righteousness of its cause. And each of the groups make forays among the next generation. But it is unthinkable that a final recognition of the great number of ways in which man, during the course of history and at the present time, is solving the problems of life, should not bring with it in turn the downfall of our belief in a single standard. And when no one group claims ethical sanction for its customs, and each group welcomes to its midst only those who are temperamentally fitted for membership, then we shall have realized the high point of individual choice and universal toleration which a heterogeneous culture and a heterogeneous culture alone can attain. Samoa knows but one way of life and teaches it to her children. Will we, who have the knowledge of many ways, leave our children free to choose among them?[36]

Mead and Benedict firmly believed that research into primitive cultures would reveal a pathway to social reform in modern society, and to a form of social engineering, albeit not of the Skinnerian variety.[37] What, Mead asked, was the nature of *American* culture? What determined its propensity for either constructive or destructive behavior? Furthermore, how could individual character be shaped to preserve American democracy?

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[36] Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive for Western Civilization* (New York, Mentor Books, 1949, c1928), 145.

Part I. *Forging a New Method of Comparative Cultural Anthropology in the 1930s*

As Thomas Haskell, Jill Morawski, and Hunter Crowther-Heyck have observed, the interdisciplinary focus of American social science in the 1920s and 30s had its origins in the acknowledgement of a causal interdependence between individuals and their urban environments at the turn of the century.[38] The shift away from traditional concepts of the individual in the ensuing decades had important implications for professional organization as social scientists sought to build new techniques in urban management.[39] The crisis of scientific naturalism in the 1920s and 30s in the social sciences in particular factored heavily in the search for public authority in the social science disciplines. Not only had it undermined classical democracy, it also brought rationality itself into question. This forced social scientists to examine the role of subjectivity in theory and methodology.[40] But these events also signaled the possibility for a true science of humanity, one that could transcend human history as well as the intangible inner life of the individual. Strict attention to standards of investigation, as well as a mathematically oriented approach to human behavior and social phenomena, it was thought, could counter the threat of scientific naturalism.[41]

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[37] Richard Handler, "Vigorous Male and Aspiring Female: Poetry, Personality, and Culture in Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict," in Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, 127-55. See page 151.

[38] Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the 19th Century Crisis of Authority* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Jill G. Morawski, "Organizing Knowledge and Behavior at Yale's Institute of Human Relations," *Isis* 77 (1986): 219-42; Hunter Crowther-Heyck, *Organization Man: The Life and Work of Herbert Simon*, forthcoming (Fall, 2004) from Johns Hopkins Press.

[39] Morawski, "Organizing Knowledge," 219, 221.

[40] Ibid., 220.

[41] Ibid.

In recounting the history of the Institute of Human Relations (IHR) at Yale University in the 1930s, for example, Jill Morawski argued that such centers of interdisciplinary research contributed to the rationalization of social scientific research and collaboration. With sponsorship from the Carnegie Foundation and the National Research Council the first director, James Angell, invoked a *corporate* model of scientific collaboration for the Institute in 1929. Scientific practice would be cleansed of subjectivity and irrationality through centralized planning strategies similar to those in industrial production management.[42] The rationalization of the research environment in the search for order and control, as Morawski observed, also entailed a reductionist view of human nature. Indeed, the behavioral/mechanical view of humanity appeared to be essential to integrating and standardizing research collaboration around 'production' objectives for scientific output.[43] This approach to the self also seemed essential in linking social science to municipal, government, and military projects in urban management.

The emphasis on systemization was most evident in the IHR under the leadership of Clark Hull in the late 1930s. Hull introduced an even more rigorous plan for research production through a system of seminar collaboration. Hull demanded that a precise decision making system be used in determining when and how experiments would be done, and who would do them. The seminar model also purged experiments of social and cultural considerations so that research was based solely on theory and method, a

[42] Ibid., 222-25.

[43] Ibid., 227.

hallmark feature, as Morawski observes, of physical science.[44] These "methodological mechanics" streamlined the research process in what I would characterize as a very Tayloresque manner. Although Morawski does not describe it this way, she notes that Hull's initiatives proved very successful in meeting the goals of collaborative research -- control, organization, and the promise of social applications. They entailed a mechanical approach to the self. This clearly shows how professional ideals shaped the scientific approach to human nature in the 1930s.

As Hunter Crowther-Heyck has demonstrated, however, other social scientists lobbied for an interdisciplinary framework in social science that reflected a liberal-managerial approach to social management.[45] The political scientists Harold Lasswell and Charles Merriam at the Chicago School of social science argued, for example, that bureaucratic and corporate models of social management could accommodate individual liberty if they were grounded in democratic values. Democracy in an urbanized America, however, demanded both the rationalization of social management and the central role of a managerial elite in controlling complex social forces. Lasswell and Merriam believed that the purpose of social science was not to educate the public (whose rationality, they felt, could not be trusted) but to train and advise administrators in local, city, and federal governments. This aim of social science, as Crowther-Heyck argues, was evident especially during the nationwide city-management movement of the 1920s and 30s. The drive to put city management on a corporate footing fundamentally shaped what he has

[44] Ibid., 235-39, especially page 238.

[45] Crowther-Heyck, *Organization Man*, 64-65 (typescript).

termed the control-governance philosophy of science advisorship in the Chicago School.[46]

As with the IHR, Merriam's efforts to combine scientific research and social reform in such agencies as the International City Manager Association and the Public Administration Clearing House (both of which he helped bring to Chicago) indicates the common desire among social scientists of all persuasions to help rationalize the processes of social administration.[47] Margaret Mead shared in this vision in the 1930s, but her participation in interdisciplinary projects was intended to both educate the public and serve in an advisory capacity in government. Her search for order and control, for models of culture, and for new analytical criteria, entailed a vision of humanity that celebrated subjectivity, rationality, and limitless potential. Indeed, her aim was to demonstrate that collaborative interdisciplinary social science could produce techniques of social management without embracing a mechanistic approach to the self. Mead and her colleagues therefore criticized theoretical and methodological reductionism in the social sciences in the 1920s and 30s. Although Mead ran in the same academic circles as those in the Chicago School and the Yale Institute, her own cohort was firmly dedicated to a liberal-democratic vision of social management, one that upheld the uniqueness and dignity of the individual.

In keeping with the private philanthropic sponsorship of social science research in the 1920s the Social Science Research Council sponsored a series of seminars held in Hanover, Washington in 1925 that were designed specifically to foster collaboration

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[46] Ibid., 66-70.

[47] Ibid., 81.

among anthropologists, psychologists, and other social scientists.[48] As Mead recalled in her introduction to a book that resulted from these seminars, *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples* (1937), the idea of an interdisciplinary study of individual character in relation to patterns of aggression had its beginnings in these Hanover seminars in the early 1930s. These sessions facilitated numerous collaborations among social scientists working on culture and personality studies.[49]

Other culture and personality seminars were hosted by Mead at Columbia University, and by psychologist Abram Kardiner, at both Columbia and the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. Still another was held by Edward Sapir, John Dollard, and the psychoanalyst, Harry Stack Sullivan, at Yale in the early 1930s.[50] The aim in having

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[48] For more on the history of the SSRC see Donald Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Elbridge Sibley, *Social Science Research Council: The First Fifty Years* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1974). For more on the Hanover seminars see Regna Darnell, "Personality and Culture: The Fate of the Sapirian Alternative," in Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others,* 156-83. For background on anthropological research in the discipline overall in the 1930s see George Stocking, "Ideas and Institutions -- Interwar Anthropology in America," in Stocking, *Selected Papers in the American Anthropologist, 1921-1945* (Washington, D. C.: American Anthropological Association, 1976), 1-44.

[49] Margaret Mead, *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961, c1937), 1.

[50] Gerald Manson, "Abram Kardiner and the Neo-Freudian Alternative in Culture and Personality," in Stocking, *Malinowski Rivers, Benedict and Others*, 77-79. A student of both Freud and Boas, Kardiner was a psychoanalyst with training in anthropology who was interested in models of personality based on cultural determinants. He participated in the Columbia seminars for ten years and later published a seminal work, *The Individual and His Society: The Psychodynamics of Primitive Social Organization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), which served as a model for what Manson calls "culturalist psychology," or the neo-Freudian application of psychoanalytic techniques to culture and personality. Along with fellow psychologists and émigrés, Karen Horney and Erich Fromm, Kardiner started his own series of seminars at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute in 1934 that attracted many of the members of the Columbia and Yale groups, including Mead and Abraham Maslow. Out of these seminars, as Manson notes, came several other seminal works that include Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), Edward Sapir's article, "The Emergence of the Concept of Personality in a Study of Cultures," *Journal of Social Psychology* 5 (1934): 400-15 and two works in the cultural psychology vein by John Dollard, *Criteria for the Life History, With Analysis of Six Notable Documents* (New Haven: Yale Institute of Human Relations, 1935) and *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (New Haven: Yale Institute of Human Relations,1937). It is also worth noting that Horney, Sullivan, and Fromm were part of a movement to promote a neo-Freudian, humanist oriented psychology in the interwar and postwar years. See Jan Zimmerman, "Transcendent Psychology: Erik H. Erikson, Erich Fromm Karen Horney, Abraham

interdisciplinary panels for the workshops at these seminars was to bring all the theoretical and methodological resources from psychology, sociology, psychiatry, biology, and anthropology to bear upon the study of the individual as a representative of an entire society. "The culture and personality approach," furthermore, as Mead proclaimed,

> demand[ed] that these separate disciplines cease to abstract certain aspects of human life and study them without reference to the whole individual, and to the numbers of whole individuals who make up any group. It insists that there is a common meeting ground where the hypotheses of each discipline can be tested out and made relevant to a more genuine social science.[51]

Mead believed that only by bringing the social sciences together in a common effort could a holistic vision of individuals and societies be drawn.

A subcommittee of the SSRC commissioned Mead and her colleagues in 1934 to survey extant anthropological literature and delineate cooperative and competitive patterns among different cultures.[52] Their efforts were to be combined with data from various psychological and sociological studies in order to explore such behavior using

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H. Maslow, Harry Stack Sullivan and the Quest for a Healthy Humanity" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1982). For an institutional history of the Freudian schools that they founded, and their fate in postwar Freudian psychology, see Neil G. McLaughlin, "Why Do Schools of Thought Fail? Neo-Freudianism as a Case Study in the Sociology of Knowledge," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 34 (1998): 113-34. For appraisals of Sullivan in conjunction with Ruth Benedict's work see F. Barton Evans III, *Harry Stack Sullivan: Interpersonal Theory and Psychotherapy* (London: Routledge, 1996); Calvin I. Saxton, "Educating for Worldmindedness: The Theories of Harry Stack Sullivan, Ruth Benedict, and Brock Chisolm" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1995).

[51] Mead, *Cooperation and Competition*, 2.

[52] Ibid., 3. May and Doob published a report on these seminars, as did Mead in 1937. See Mark May and Leonard Doob, "A Report of the Subcommittee on Competitive and Cooperative Habits, of the Committee on Personality and Culture, Based on Analysis of Research Achievement and Opportunity by Members of the Subcommittee," *Subcommittee on Competitive and Cooperative Habits*, Subcommittee: Gordon Allport, Gardner Murphy, Mark May, Chairman (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1937). For more on the careers of Murphy and Allport in personality psychology in the 1930s see Katherine Pandora, *Rebels Within the Ranks: Psychologists' Critique of Scientific Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

multiple levels of inquiry. For this survey Mead assembled a group of colleagues and graduate students at Columbia that included her mentors A. Radcliffe-Brown and Ruth Benedict, as well as the psychologist, Erich Fromm, the sociologist, John Dollard, and the philosopher, Abraham Edel.[53]

Over the course of the year-long seminar Mead and her colleagues set about formulating a research strategy for the comparative study of primitive cultures. Her efforts were inspired by a familiarity with other interdisciplinary initiatives, especially those of Edward Sapir, Harry S. Sullivan and the psychologist, Lawrence K. Frank, who worked on integrating the sciences of human relations at Columbia and who also participated in Mead's seminars.[54] The techniques used by Mead's panel involved individual and group assessments of previously collected ethnologies to gain a comprehensive understanding of social habits in each culture. This included studies of primitive cultures in New Guinea (Arapesh), the Philippines (Samoans), and North America (Dakota, Eskimo, Zuni), among many others. The manuscript that eventually resulted from the comparative analysis of thirteen different primitive cultures, *Cooperation and Competition in Primitive Cultures* (1937), marked, by Mead's

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[53] On A. Radcliffe-Brown and British structuralism see A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Adam Kuper, *The Social Anthropology of Radcliff-Brown* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977). On Mead's views of Brown's structuralism and their professional collaboration see George W. Stocking, "Margaret Mead and Radcliffe-Brown: Society Social Systems, Cultural Character, and the Idea of Culture, 1931-1935," *History of Anthropology Newsletter* 20, no. 2 (1993): 3-11. For more on the theories of Erich Fromm see *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*, ed. Mauricio Cortina and Michael Maccoby (Northvail, NJ: Aronson, 1996); Gerhard P. Knapp, *The Art of Living: Erich Fromm's Life and Works* (New York: Lang, 1989). For an overview of John Dollard's work and life see Steven Weiland, "Life History, Psychoanalysis, and Social Science: The Example of John Dollard," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 86 (1987): 269-81.

[54] Mead, *Cooperation and Competition*, 4. Mead also mentions that her participation in the Hanover Seminar of Human Relations helped her formulate the strategy for this study. Lawrence Frank was one of Mead's close colleagues and shared in her progressive-oriented reform agendas for both social science and society. See Stephen J. Cross, "Design For Living: Lawrence K. Frank and the Progressive Legacy in American Social Science" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins, 1994).

reckoning, no less than a new research template for comparative anthropology as the *science of culture studies*.

The research results, Mead asserted, yielded a basic strategy for assessing cultures, not from cataloged artifacts or social evolutionary theories, but through the examination of available ethnographic, sociological, and psychological data. Mead claimed to have discovered four general areas of analysis that would yield patterns of individual personality and group behavior in each culture: *material environment, technology, social structure,* and *education*.[55] The conditions of the natural environment, the availability of resources, as well as the technologies devised to exploit them, all had effects on how people organized their cultures. This in turn contributed to levels of cooperation and competition found in the social structure, the key factors in determining what Mead would later call a culture's overall "national character."

The dynamics of *social structure*, Mead discovered, appeared to be the central factor in shaping the interrelations between individuals and groups. "The recognition of this fact," Mead said,

> led us far toward the most basic conclusion which comes out of this research: that competitive and cooperative behavior on the part of individual members of a society is fundamentally conditioned by the total social emphasis of that society, that the goals for which individuals will work are culturally determined and are not the response of the organism to an external, culturally undefined situation, like a simple scarcity of food.[56]

And just as importantly, this meant that there were no arbitrary or universal criteria for predicting patterns of cooperation and competition in cultures. Cooperative and

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[55] Mead, *Cooperation and Competition*, 14-15.

[56] Ibid., 18.

competitive behaviors, Mead concluded, were formed according to the traditions of each culture. This revealed exciting possibilities for social planning in the American context.[57] Mead's seminar group, however, ultimately found it necessary to dispense with the original request of the SSRC subcommittee for a report on universal patterns of human behavior, since, as they had discovered, none existed. The panel chose instead to describe character traits in relation to particular *social systems*, a technique that could still provide some level of predictive and useful information about different cultures.

Mead thus had found some general research criteria with which to speculate on a culture's potential for either competitive or cooperative behavioral patterns. Individual social status in cooperative cultures, for example, seemed not to undergo much change. Competitive cultures, however, seemed somewhat more malleable given increased tensions between different factions and groups. Competition, Mead discovered, made individual social status more precarious; competitive cultures were organized around the *initiative* of the individual.[58] There was less of this in highly cooperative cultures, however, since groups worked together toward common ends. Mead asserted that war and conflict were more common among highly competitive and individualistic cultures.[59]

> We have seen that it is not [for example] the actual supply of desired goods which decreases whether or not the members of a society will compete for it or cooperate and share it, it is the way the structure of the society is built up that determines whether individual members shall cooperate or shall compete with one another.[60]

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[57] Ibid., 19.

[58] Ibid., 480.

[59] Ibid., 481.

[60] Ibid.

Individual behavior manifested competitiveness or cooperativeness depending on the cultural conditions. When the individual ego was closely attuned to status and property as measures of success, competition was the predominant character trait. When achievement was judged on the basis of its value for the entire community, however, a more cooperative character structure resulted. Competitive cultures tended to push children into adulthood more rapidly, while cooperative cultures encouraged a more gradual integration into adult society.[61] In terms of individual character formation, it appeared to Mead that the criteria of success, rather than material conditions, ultimately determined the intensity of cooperative and competitive traits in a culture.

From a historical standpoint, the reform subtext of Mead's cultural analyses in these instances was very apparent. *Cooperation and Competition* was published in the midst of an economic depression and an unfolding fascist threat in Europe. The scientific explanation of cooperation and competition, and Mead's opinions about the merits of each, were thus manifest in her culture and personality studies in the 1930s. Mead's early research into the character traits of cultures eventually culminated at the end of the 1940s in Ruth Benedict's Research in Contemporary Cultures center at Columbia and the production of an interdisciplinary research manual for studying national character in 1953. Compiled under the editorship of Margaret Mead and her student colleague, Rhoda Metraux, and with contributions from Geoffrey Gorer, Martha Wolfenstein, Gregory Bateson, and others, *The Study of Culture at a Distance* (1953) presented techniques for examining national character in cases where no direct contact with the

[61] Ibid., 495.

culture was possible. In examining Japanese, German, and Russian national character during the war, for example, these techniques combined the skills of the historian, who might only have access to textual materials, film, and art, with the analytical survey methods of anthropologist.[62] The ability to make assessments of national character with limited resources, Mead and Benedict felt, would be vital for future domestic and foreign relations policy design.[63]

Culture At A Distance, in fact, represented for Mead the basis of a new "science of culture." It included lessons gleaned from researches into primitive cultures, the collaborative study of competition and cooperation, the study of national character for the war effort, and research into contemporary cultures by Mead, Benedict, and their colleagues at Yale, Columbia, and New York University. In the early 1950s this culminated in an effort to incorporate national character studies into projects in international relations and world peace sponsored by organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).[64] Professional

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[62] Mead and Metraux, *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, 3.

The Research in Contemporary Cultures consortium at Columbia spawned a number of seminal studies in national character during the 1940s by Benedict, Gorer, Metraux, and others. See examples like Geoffrey Gorer, *The American People: A Study in National Character* (New York: Norton, 1948); Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1946).

[63] Mead and Metraux, *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, 6.

[64] For background on UNESCO and its projects in the 1950s see Seth Spaulding and Lin Lin, *Historical Dictionary of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* (Laham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997).

The development of the concept of national character via the culture and personality studies of the 1930s and early 40s, as historian George Stocking and sociologist Alex Inkeles have noted, was fueled by the desire among Mead, Benedict, Gorer, and Metraux to make techniques in cultural anthropology applicable to domestic and international projects of social reform. As a result of the rush to deploy these concepts into the war effort and the internationalism movement that followed, however, a critical assessment of national character by anthropologists had not then taken shape. Part of the problem with such synthetic studies of national character, as historian William Manson points out, was that members of different disciplines did not speak each other's scientific languages, and this made it difficult for all to see the value of combining theories and techniques. The professional criticism in anthropological circles over

criticism of national character theory as an organizing principle for anthropology began to surface in the mid- to late 1950s, however, and this contributed to its subsequent downfall among a new generation of cultural anthropologists. As sociologist Alex Inkeles has observed, anthropology and personality psychology nevertheless benefited tremendously from the cross-fertilization that national character studies precipitated.[65] During the war years, Mead and her colleagues had found an effective vehicle in national character studies for marketing comparative cultural anthropology and social science to military and government agencies. It is to her emergence as a science advisor during the war years, and to her critique of American readiness for war and its aftermath, that we turn next.

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national character that emerged in the early 1950s focused on the unreasonable level of personality and cultural uniformity that national character was made to assume, as well as the use of "Freudian causal schemes" in delineating personality formation. One clear example of this, as Manson mentions, was that of infant swaddling in the research of Gorer and Rickman's study of Russian national character. Restrictive swaddling of children was used to explain a host of adult character traits. See William Manson, "Abram Kardiner," in Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and Others*, 88.

[65] Stocking, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict, and* Others, 11. As Inkeles notes the period between 1939 and 1945 saw the most intense activity in the development of the national character concept. Further theoretical elaborations came with Abram Kardiner's disquisition in *Psychological Frontiers of Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945) and *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture*, ed. Henry A. Murray and Clyde Kluckhohn (New York: Knopf, 1948). Geoffrey Gorer's work on American and Russian national character came in for particular criticism, as did Mead's *Powder* where cultural analysis was mixed with social criticism, something that many anthropologists felt invalidated her assessment of American national character. For more on the history of the concept of national character in cultural anthropology and its development by the generation of anthropologists after Mead in the 1960s and 70s see Alex Inkeles, *National Character: A Psycho-Social Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997). For appraisals of national character in the subsequent generation of anthropologists, see Manson's references to *Psychological Anthropology: Approaches to Culture and Personality*, ed. F. L. K. Hsu (Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1961) and M. Singer, "A Survey of Culture and Personality theory and Research in Studying Cross-Culturally," in *Studying Personality Cross-Culturally*, ed. Bert Kaplan (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1961), 9-90.

Part II. *Wartime Applications: Marketing National Character to the Government*

As the historian Virginia Yans-McLaughlin has noted, the Second World War forced many anthropologists to examine the political and social implications of their work as their association with government agencies increased. Moreover, after the war, as McLaughlin states, no one could avoid what she terms the "politics of anthropology" and its relevance to foreign and domestic affairs of state.[66] Mead's primary aim during the war years and beyond in working with government agencies on special committees, as well as in rallying professional social science to the cause, was to promote interdisciplinary, collaborative studies in national character and to advocate for the improvement and expansion of community services for children and families on the home front.

By the early 1940s Mead's professional reputation, as well as her status as a public intellectual, had been established through the popularity of her famous studies of primitive cultures and her successful participation in government policy-making circles. Using this reputation to gain access to government circles, Mead became very active in involving the social sciences in the war effort. Mead's growing reputation as a prominent government advisor during this period is indicated in her work with the National Research Council's Committee on Food Habits, the Committee for National Morale

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[66] Yans-McLaughlin, "Science, Democracy, and Ethics," 185. For a history of anthropologists' participation in government during the war and afterward see *The Politics of Anthropology: From Colonialism and Sexism Toward a View From Below*, ed. G. Huizier and B. Mannheim (Mouton: The Hague, 1979); Margaret Mead, "The Use of Anthropology in World War Two and After," in *The Uses of Anthropology*, ed. Walter Goldschmidt (Washington, D. C.: American Anthropological Association, 1979), 145-57. For background on the fate of social science participation in government policy making see *Social Science and Policy Making: A Search for Relevance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David L. Featherman and Maris A. Vinovskis (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

(organized privately by social scientists), the U. S. Children's Bureau, the Office of War Information, and the Office of Strategic Services.[67] Mead's work with the Committee for National Morale (CNM) in particular serves as an example of how Mead and her colleagues attempted to craft knowledge products that would have practical applications in the war effort.[68] Not being able to offer up physical technologies, Mead and her professional cohort endeavored nevertheless to show that concepts such as national character could be powerful tools in planning war strategy.

With the pressing need for information about how different nations and cultures, allies and enemies alike, might respond to escalating world conflict, Mead and her colleagues began converting the techniques for analyzing character traits in primitive cultures to those of modern, large-scale societies where direct study was not always possible. Research models for evaluating cultures *at a distance* presented a serious challenge. As with the cooperation/competition studies, research conditions demanded innovation in analyzing the best available (but often incomplete) data on the culture in question. The rapid production of information 'tools' for the armed services was paramount.[69] In moving from analysis of the small-scale local community to that of an entire nation or region of the world, Mead, Ruth Benedict and Geoffrey Gorer, promoted

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[67] For a history of the U. S. Children's Bureau see Kriste A. Lindenmeyer, *'A Right to Childhood': The U. S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-1946* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). For historical background on the history of food studies in the NRC, see Marion Nestle and Donna V. Porter, "Evolution of Federal Dietary Guidance Policy: From Food Adequacy to Chronic Disease Prevention," *Caduceus: A Museum Quarterly for the Health Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1990): 43-67.

[68] See comments on Mead's activities in this committee in Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 48-53.

[69] Mead and Metraux, *Study of Culture at a Distance*, 364.

the appeal of national character theory as a way of efficiently encapsulating the key cultural characteristics of various nation-states.[70]

After returning from Bali in 1939 Mead began working with an independent group of prominent researchers attempting to organize social scientists for government service. The original aim of this group, the Committee for National Morale (CNM), had been to address the apparent lack of resolve among some European nations in confronting the menace of Nazi aggression. The research plan was first to assess the national morale among these countries in order to judge their readiness for war, and second, to implement a program for increasing American morale. The CNM attracted many of the most prominent scholars and scientists of the time. Its membership is testament to the considerable support among socially active scientists who wanted to place social science in the service of national defense.[71] Its ranks boasted over one hundred members organized into seventeen different subcommittees. These smaller groups would examine the psychological, medical social, economic, and historical dimensions of national morale in the United States and Europe and assess their relevance to the design of domestic and foreign policy, public opinion and propaganda strategies, the construction of social services, and the delineation of educational objectives.[72] Prominent participants included

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[70] Carleton Mabee, "Margaret Mead and Behavioral Scientists in World War II: Problems in Responsibility, Truth, and Effectiveness," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 23 (1987): 3-13.

[71] For an overview of scientific involvement in social issues in the interwar period see Peter J. Kuznick, *Beyond the Laboratory: Scientists As Political Activists in 1930s America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Another important organization responsible for bringing together psychologists interested in addressing the implications of psychology in social reform was the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. For an historical appraisal of SPSSI see the collection of articles edited by Benjamin Harris, "Fifty Years of Psychology and Social Issues," *Journal of Social Issues* 42 (1986): 1-233; Ian Nicholson, "The Politics of Scientific Social Reform, 1936-1960: Goodwin Watson and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 33 (1997): 39-60.

[72] From a list of members and subcommittees for the CNM. Papers of Margaret Mead, Special Working Groups, n. d., Container F1, Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C. For an

Robert Yerkes, James Angell, Karl Menninger, George Gallup, Max Lerner, Gregory Bateson, Leonard Doob, Gifford Pinchot, and Geoffrey Gorer. Their intent was to help place a national morale program on a sound scientific footing. Such a program would be crucial in getting the country ready for war, Mead thought, especially after a decade of economic depression.

The research plan on the home front would be "the study of those factors, psychologically and sociologically most vital to morale."[73] Capitalizing on the available data from a wealth of sociological studies of communities (such as the famous Middletown studies), groups and organizations within these communities (such as unions, community service groups, and student youth groups), and individual biographical histories, the CNM aspired first to diagnose American attitudes toward war, and America's appropriate role in the global conflict.[74] The Committee also conducted research to discover how knowledge of enemy national character could be exploited to gain a strategic advantage. In one instance Mead headed up a subcommittee on German national character that addressed strategies for war propaganda. The subcommittee

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overview of CNM aims see Gregory Bateson, "Morale and National Character," in *Civilian Morale, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Second Yearbook*, ed. Goodwin Watson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942), 71-91.

[73] From a copy of the original research summary presented by the CNM to the National Research Council, Papers of Margaret Mead, Special Working Groups, n. d., Container F1, Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C.

[74] The Middletown studies were conducted in 1924-25 in Muncie, Indiana, and were designed to show the effects of commercialism and industrialism on the traditional community structure of an American town. Sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd argued that these traditional networks were gradually undermined by consumerism. See Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929). For further background see Dwight W. Hoover, "Changing Views of Community Studies: Middletown as a Case Study," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 25 (1989): 111-24; Richard W. Fox, *Epitaph for Middletown: Robert S. Lynd and the Analysis of Consumer Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1983); John S. Gilkeson, "American Social Scientists and the Domestication of 'Class' 1929-1955," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 31 (1995): 331-46.

recommended using refugee informants from various economic classes, a technique similar to Mead's use of native informants in her primitive culture research.[75] From these and other studies the CNM developed a scientific "treatise" on the principles of morale, a set of guidelines for building and enhancing it in the American context, as well as methods isolating those psychological factors that counteracted it. The manual, they claimed, could also be applied to the study of enemy morale programs.[76]

Historian Carleton Mabee has observed that the concept of the CNM was never endorsed fully by the American government. Although it made inroads in successfully promoting the role of social science in the war effort by winning research contracts, the CNM was funded only to a limited degree. A separate social science agency, hoped for by many of its members, never materialized. Government officials remained skeptical about what "academics" could really do for the war effort. Most social scientists subsequently were recruited into established military and government agencies for work on other research projects.[77] Mead herself went on to serve as the secretary for the National Research Council's Committee on Food Habits that looked at American eating habits and their potential impact on the war effort.[78] Although the Committee for

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[75] From an undated copy of the minutes taken in a subcommittee meeting on cooperative national psychology over which Mead presided. 24 March 194[?]. Papers of Margaret Mead, Special Working Groups, n. d., Container F1, Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C.

[76] Ibid. Mead was involved with the Social Sciences subcommittee and the Youth and Child Development subcommittee.

[77] Mabee, "Mead and Behavioral Scientists in World War II," 4.

[78] For an overview of the Food Committee and its activities see Carl E. Guthe, "History of the Committee on Food Habits," in *The Problem of Changing Food Habits, Bulletin of the national Research Council*, No. 108, 1-19. See also Margaret Mead, Food Habits Research: Problems of the 1960s. (Washington, D. C.: National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, 1964). For more on collaborative research funded by the NRC see Glenn E. Bugos, "Managing Cooperative Research and Borderland Science in the National Research Council, 1922-1942," *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences* 20 (1989): 1-32.

National Morale was short lived, it provided Mead and her cohort with crucial guideposts in designing research into national character and contemporary cultures.[79]

At the end of the 1940s, Ruth Benedict's Research in Contemporary Cultures (RCC) center continued to thrive at Columbia. As Hunter Crowther-Heyck has observed, a host of interdisciplinary social science research centers such as the RCC were launched in the decades after the war. They were funded by a diverse collection of patrons that included universities, private philanthropic organizations, and government/military agencies.[80] Although most of these patrons were interested in research that was behavioral and technical in orientation, the RCC geared its research toward interdisciplinary studies on specific issues in international policy.[81]

Crowther-Heyck has noted also the vital role of committee and project work during and after the war in coordinating research. Mead's network of academic, political, and government connections in the 1940s established her as what Crowther-Heyck describes as a broker of interdisciplinary research, a well-connected scientist able to bring individuals and groups together.[82] The activities of Mead and other such brokers contributed significantly to the institutional growth of the professions and their incorporation into the military industrial complex after the war.[83]

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Hunter Crowther-Heyck, *Organization Man*, p. 249, 252 (typescript). Such centers, as Crowther-Heyck notes, included the Harvard Department and Laboratory of Social Relations, MIT Center for International Studies, the RAND Corporation, and the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

[81] See Crowther-Heyck on patron expectations for social science research in *Organization Man*, 253 (typescript).

[82] Ibid., 255.

[83] Ibid., 274.

As Mead would argue in *And Keep Your Powder Dry*, and elsewhere in the popular and academic press, American social science and culture needed to change together. Mead argued that the future of society lay in the expansion of human potential through comparative cultural analysis of those familial, community, and otherwise social contexts in which human creativity, especially in the young, might be enhanced. Social change, as both Mead and Skinner might have agreed, provided Americans with opportunities to chart new patterns of culture that would ensure the survival of American society and, as Mead hoped, liberal democracy.

National Character, Nationalism, and a New Model for American Democracy

Mead had aggressively deployed the concept of national character in examining American culture during the Second World War in her book, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America*, published in 1942. In this, a highly rhetorical and anti-isolationist social commentary, she presented her thoughts on the character traits that best fostered democracy. By far, the most important factors in molding a culture were child rearing and education. Her emphasis on the value of cooperative cultural patterns in *Powder* foreshadowed her commentaries on education reform, liberal democracy, and international communication in the postwar decades.[84]

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[84] Mead, *Powder*, 14.

Powder was intended as a call to arms, directed broadly to all Americans, but also in particular to American social scientists. Just as physicists and chemists had been enlisted to apply their talents to the machinations of war, Mead argued, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists needed to put their knowledge to work. If the social crisis of the Depression had failed sufficiently to coax social scientists from their academic 'ivory towers' en masse, Mead argued, surely a threat to the fate of the free world would.

If Americans were to preserve a privileged place for the individual and encourage each person's talents and abilities, Mead argued, the virtues of freedom and choice had to be affirmed over social conformism. For Mead, such an open society had to uphold the ethical and political imperatives necessary for a true science of social progress. This vision entailed viewing the self as a dynamic nexus of creativity and uniqueness, not as an automaton. The presence of both of these notions of the self in different parts of American culture, Mead observed, however, was a reflection of conflicting social values in American culture. As Mead asserted in *Powder*, for example, Americans in general faced a particularly confusing set of cultural rules about the appropriateness of cooperation and competition in different social situations. There were also mixed messages for women about proper gender roles, and for children about their roles in adult society.

In *Powder* Mead brought her comparative anthropological research to bear upon these aspects of American national character.[85] Mead wanted to present her readers with a historically informed, scientific 'diagnosis' of the strengths and weaknesses of a nation faced with the task of preserving democracy in the Western hemisphere. War was waged, Mead observed, not just between opposing countries, but also between different cultures, each with its own sets of traditions, values, and social practices governing everything from socioeconomic policy to education.[86] Preparedness for war required scrutiny of Americans from every walk of life. Americans, Mead cautioned, could not afford to presume that commonly held concepts of human nature, individuality, race,

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[85] Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry*.

[86] Ibid., 15-20.

gender roles, and social conventions would be adequate in evaluating their enemies, or themselves. Mead's anthropology had already exposed the fallacy of racial and historical stereotypes.[87] Americans, she asserted, now needed the special insights of anthropologists in assessing the unique national character of each combatant in order to predict their response to a world crisis.

According to Mead, the self-image of American children depended in great measure upon the approval of their parents. Love and acceptance were based on the child's ability to live up to standards of success gleaned from mass culture. Such was the case for the individual in society who sought validation through the approval of peers. Success in America, as Mead asserted, was measured by the ability of individuals to distinguish themselves personally, intellectually, and materially from their peers through competition. Material wealth and social mobility had become the hallmarks of the successful American. This need for recognition and success was most acute, Mead observed, among the middle classes, the American barometer of national health. And in a nation built upon social mobility and progress, the success of the middle class reflected that of the nation, just as the success of the child indicated the health of the family.[88]

The story of American children and families, then, mirrored that of American character in general. Such analyses gave way to many other generalizations about Americans. "Their nature," Mead asserted,

> is geared to success and to movement, invigorated by obstacles and difficulties, but plunged into guilt and despair by a catastrophic failure or a wholesale alteration in the upward and onward pace;...a character which measures its successes and failures only against near contemporaries and

[87] Ibid., 21.

[88] Ibid., 65, 68.

> engages in various quantitative devices for reducing every contemporary to its own stature; a character which sees success as the reward of virtue and failure as the stigma for not being good enough;...a character oriented towards an unknown future, ambivalent towards other cultures, which are regarded with a sense of inferiority as more coherent than our own....[89]

Yet it was these "catastrophic failures" and "wholesale alterations" in the formula for progress that most concerned Mead in light of the war. The demoralizing effects of the First World War, coupled with the failure of the economy in the late 1920s, and the Depression in the 30s, she argued, had fostered profound disillusionment and cynicism among Americans.[90] How could those raised in such an environment serve as an example to their children? How, Mead wondered, could they ask their children to wage another war?

As Mead saw it, the parents of the war generation had failed in the Great War to finish the job of bringing democracy to Europe. Instead they left it to the scourge of fascism and indulged themselves in a decade of waste, decadence, and materialism in the 1920s. The Depression that followed left the country demoralized, and its people endured a poverty of both body and spirit.[91] Fortunately, as Mead assured, it was precisely because Americans were not bound to tradition and their past that they could, through the war, create the American dream anew. For Mead, the war ironically presented a unique opportunity to set things right.

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[89] Ibid., 193-94.

[90] Mead also feared that such cynicism and a desire to succeed once again as a nation would lead, as it did in some cases, to American forms of fascism. See her comments in *Powder*, 195-204.

[91] Ibid., 115-25.

Part of Mead's goal in *Powder*, was thus to convince Americans that their national character could still be wielded as a weapon both of war and peace.[92] The young people who would fight the war needed all the moral and material support that their parents' generation could muster. Mead aspired to place the social sciences, particularly comparative anthropology, at the forefront of this effort. By studying the processes of American character formation and building upon those traits that could be utilized to motivate people, social science could play a vital role in national and international reconstruction.

Inasmuch as her anti-isolationist analysis of American character in *Powder* was an exposition on why Americans should embrace war mobilization, Mead's treatise also revealed a fully developed agenda for postwar social reform. Predictably, this would entail the expansion of the social sciences to aid in democratic reconstruction. The engineering of culture, even while used for war, Mead argued, need not result in the kind of totalitarian regimes seen in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. True social engineering, Mead asserted, would not reduce humanity to the level of the machine. While it could not bring forth the social utopia hoped for in these social 'experiments,' it could nevertheless serve the cause of freedom and democracy.[93]

> It is possible that this type of social science, which is not a mere lifeless aping of the mannerisms of the natural sciences but which shapes its

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[92] Mead claimed that although the expression of human emotion was universal to human beings, the mode of its expression was different in each culture. With regard to aggression, American modes are explained by the way we learn as children to use aggression in different confrontational situations. The rules, she said, can be complex. The end result, however, was that Americans tended only to fight when provoked first by an adversary of equal strength. See Mead, *Powder*, chapters 9 and 10, 139-71.

[93] Ibid., 176-78. This form of social engineering, which Mead said stems from the physicalist view of human nature embodied in Pavlovian science, aims to dictate rather than facilitate a desired social structure, to oppress rather than liberate. One can imagine similar comments by Mead about Skinner's vision of social utopia as well.

> hypothesis to its materials and includes the repercussions of a hypothesis inside its equations, can give us premises by which we can set men free; release in them the energies which can be trusted to develop towards more freedom instead of towards a machine model of slavery or Utopian totalitarianism.[94]

True to her politics of applied social science, Mead also believed that a cross-national and cross-cultural approach was essential to progress, allowing Americans to transcend the perceptual boundaries of conventional culture and examine themselves in light of the 'other.' But social scientists themselves had to become more applications-oriented to make this possible. As in her previous work, Mead implored them to start this work now, before the war was over.

> How can we organize a society in which war will have no place? And as the scientific question most germane to freedom: What are the conditions in a culture, in its system of education, in its system of interpersonal relationships, which promote a sense of free will?[95]

Reworking classic American virtues, just as Skinner had in *Walden Two*, Mead hoped also to put the characteristically American traits of practicality and the puritanical virtues of inventiveness and industry to work in social experimentation, reinventing the formula of success for Americans through the study of democratic social patterns.[96] American flexibility and ability to adapt to new conditions, Mead asserted, would allow for the free exploration of new social processes. Yet, as Mead reminded, time was of the essence.

> Only by going to each people, now, while they are living their own lives in their traditional way, can we find out these accidentally discovered, these inarticulate and priceless secrets of how to draw out of each generation of children unguessed potentialities...If we use the clues which other great cultures give us, and if we work with members of those cultures in

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[94] Ibid., 182.

[95] Ibid., 183.

[96] Ibid., 209.

> building the world new, we will have ways of tapping human energies as startling, as exciting, and the ways of tapping natural resources which so dazzle our eyes today.[97]

Mead had subtly mixed together science and reform politics in her previous books, but in *Powder* there was no mistaking her agenda. *Powder*, as Virginia Yans-McLaughlin has noted, reflected the care Mead took to gear her scientific analysis to the sensibilities of the American public. In the case of sex roles, for example, in *Powder* Mead toned down the strict cultural determinism she had argued for in *Sex and Temperament* and played instead to more traditional conceptions of gender roles. *Powder* was panned roundly among American anthropologists as an inaccurate misuse of anthropological data to make social commentary. But it signaled Mead's professional shift away from field research and toward an expanding career as a social commentator and public intellectual in the 1940s. She would concentrate more fully on American problems in subsequent publications.[98]

British Social Services as a Model for Modern Democracy

Mead participated in many federal and military programs during the decades after the war and was one of the key members of the 1950 Mid-century White House Conference on Children and Youth commissioned by President Truman. This committee was charged with examining the state of American social services in light of ongoing research into family life, child development, and the socialization of young adults into

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[97] Ibid., 238.

[98] Yans-McLaughlin, "Science, Democracy, and Ethics," 205.

society.[99] Mead's call for the creation of new community-based family and educational agencies during the war embodied her convictions about the diversity and flexibility of human nature and the place of the individual in American culture. Her aim as a social science expert in this regard was not only to foster further interdisciplinary research on families and communities but also to provide recommendations about the problems of individual social adjustment to government agencies.[100]

Even in later years the policy recommendations of the Mid-century White House work groups continued to reflect Mead's influence and her use of comparative anthropology techniques to evaluate the social services infrastructure in other countries. In one particularly instructive instance Mead drafted a brief description of British social service agencies in a report for the U.S. Office of War Information and touted it as an ideal model for the postwar development of American social services.[101] This brief study, entitled "Reflections on a Short Trip to Britain," highlighted Mead's considerable admiration for what she believed was the superior effectiveness of the British system of implementing programs in education, nutrition, and community development. The British system also embodied many of the features of professional social science that Mead hoped to foster in the American context. Her findings in Britain are therefore worth brief examination.[102]

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[99] Mead maintained a career long membership in this committee and served on it during each presidential administration until her death in 1978.

[100] Yans-McLaughlin, "Science, Democracy, and Ethics," 198.

[101] Margaret Mead, "Reflections on a Short Visit to Britain," Office of the War Department, 1943-1945. n. d. Container E154. Papers of Margaret Mead. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C., 1-18.

[102] Histories of British social welfare programs and services include *British Social Welfare: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. David Gladstone (London: UCL Press, 1995); J. Dworkin, "Social Workers and National

The central feature of the British system, Mead recalled, was the tradition of allowing local communities and agencies a substantial measure of control over government funds by encouraging the direct participation of the public in policy implementation. The formation of community-based "citizen's advice bureau[s]," Mead observed, produced a healthy balance between bureaucratic administration and the public control of agencies. These committees were collaborative in nature, emphasizing flexibility in harmonizing national social policies with the realities of local community conditions. The professional agencies and citizen committees also placed value on individual perspectives in what Mead described as a characteristically British, team-oriented approach to problem solving.

Those ineffective standards of practice and professional scientific hierarchies that were more akin to American social service bureaucracy, it seemed to Mead, were much less in play in the British context.[103] In the case of implementing nutritional standards in school lunch programs, for example, Mead noted that local British agencies were given much more freedom than their American counterparts in adjusting national nutritional standards to the availability of local resources and preferences. This institutional "flexibility," which Mead found very appealing, was typical of the overall "preference for diversity" in British social welfare agencies.[104] Other features of British culture -- public participation, flexibility, cooperation, and a celebration of individual and group diversity -- also contributed to differences in the professional training of British social scientists.

Health Care: Are There Lessons from Great Britain?," *Health and Social Work* 22, no. 22 (May, 1997): 117-23; Pat Starkey, "The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943-1968: The Case of Family Services Units," *Social History of Medicine* 11, no. 3 (December, 1998): 421-41.

[103] Mead, "Reflections on a Short Visit," 3-6.

[104] Ibid., 8-9.

The ability of local and national agencies to effectively work together and accommodate regional differences reflected the willingness of British professionals to collaborate with designated lay representatives in communities rather than rely on established methodology to control the entire process. Professional and lay groups in Britain worked together to design solutions based on specific social contexts.

Mead concluded that the professional patterns of practice in British social science were a manifestation of the broader tradition of collaboration and camaraderie in the culture at large, and that this was a tradition that Americans in the postwar world should begin to imitate.[105] The British social science tradition seemed to illustrate the need for change in American social science and its obsession with efficiency, professional authority, and methodological standardization in implementing policy. American social science research overemphasized objectivity and universal methodology, which in turn contributed to what historians of science have described as the cult of the 'expert' in American society.

The question for American social scientists, Mead insisted, was how to begin designing a new science of culture that could study social patterns without compromising their complexity with standardized research methods. Further, Mead asked, could social scientists begin to *experiment* with American culture within the framework of a new science of human behavior?[106] What new cultural traditions in American communities and families would be needed in order for social experimentation and reform to take

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[105] For subsequent published comments by Mead on the ideal kinds of social scientific research institutions for community maintenance, see her lectures in Margaret Mead, *Continuities in Cultural Evolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), especially pages 298-306.

[106] Ibid., 14.

place? Mead used the British example among others to help Americans answer these questions and to understand the dual need for reform in social science as well as in society during the postwar years.

As with many in her professional cohort, Mead believed in a "humanistic democracy," based on "faith in the potentialities of human nature," as revealed by a social science rooted in interdisciplinary studies and a commitment to comprehensive and holistic approaches to human behavior and personality.[107] Like John Dewey, Mead believed in a philosophical pragmatism that reflected the interdependence of science and democracy. In his own book of the late 1930s, *Freedom and Culture* (1939), Dewey had pointed to the importance of the social sciences, particularly anthropology, as part of the basis of a new ethic of reform in the modern age. Dewey and Mead both believed that science itself possessed a "moral potential."[108]

Unlike Skinner, Mead understood that social science, being the youngest of all the sciences, was largely an historical rather than statistical or technical endeavor, a slow accumulation of cultural knowledge. "Man," Mead asserted, "is made human through his culture," and human nature could not be reduced to experimental measurement, as

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[107] Yans-McLaughlin, "Science, Democracy, and Ethics," 209.

[108] Ibid., 208; Margaret Mead, "The Comparative Study of Culture and the Purposive Cultivation of Democratic Values," in *Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life*, ed. Bryson and Fincklestein (New York, Science, Philosophy and Religion, Second Symposium, Columbia University, 1942), 56-69. For an overview of social reform ideology and its historical connection to social science see James F. Ward, "Consciousness and Community: American Idealist Social Thought From Puritanism to Social Science" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1975). For background on the progressive education movement and its connections to Mead's agenda for education reform see Ron Miller, *What Are Schools For? : Holistic Education in American Culture* (Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press, 1992); William J. Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grassroots Movements During the Progressive Era* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

Skinner had hoped.[109] Only by the slow accumulation of information could patterns of culture be discerned. One could not make a physical science of humanity, since culture and human nature were always context driven. Rather than trying to control human behavior directly, Mead asserted, the best way to effect change was to use the knowledge of specific cultural contexts to maximize the free and spontaneous development of innate human potentialities.[110] Such a prescriptive reflected both striking similarities and also distinct differences between Skinner and Mead in their approach to the self in postwar culture, particularly with regard to American families.

The Lessons of Comparative Anthropology for Postwar American Families

Mead's commentaries on the fate of the American family, gender roles, and individuality in the early 1950s drew heavily from the global, rather than merely national, context of cultural change in the postwar era. Mead believed that it was important for Americans to examine emerging social patterns in light of international social change. Mead also argued that comparative studies would help Americans understand how a traditional conception of the American family dynamic might be altered to accommodate, for example, changes in the social roles of the sexes. Mead's intent with *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (1949) was to introduce Americans to the concept of cultural malleability. Americans in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Mead

[109] See Margaret Mead, "The Modern Study of Mankind," in *An Outline of Man's Knowledge of the Modern World*, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York: McGraw Hill, 1960), 323-41. See page 330. It is important to note here that this essay seems to have been, in fact, Mead's counterpoint to behaviorist theory and technology, and was specifically aimed at Skinner.

[110] Ibid., 337-41.

observed, were attempting to live the myth of the nuclear family. This had contributed to what David Riesman described in his book, *The Lonely Crowd* (1951), as the 'other-oriented' personality, enamored of idyllic images of success, the perfect family, and the "well-adjusted" child.[111]

Again using her anthropological studies Mead hopes to use *Male and Female* to show Americans that the mass media fixation on the "perfect" middle class family actually obscured the considerable variation in family types among the cultures of the world. Citing the Samoan, Manus, Arapesh, Mundugumor, Tchambuli, Iatmul, and Balinese peoples, Mead explained the wide variations that existed among these peoples with regard to social roles for the sexes, developmental stages in children, and personality types.[112] The diversification of family models and gender roles in the American postwar context also showed that no universal or ideal family structure or individual existed.[113] Indeed, as another famous commentator of this period, Julian Huxley, put it in his review

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[111] Ibid., 264. The ideal of the family was widely discussed and criticized by social scientists and intellectuals. For an overview see Fred Matthews, "The Utopia of Human Relations: The Conflict Free Family in American Social Thought, 1930-1960," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 24 (1988): 343-62.

[112] "Male and Female," condensed and edited for publication in the *Ladies Home Journal* 66 (September, 1949): 36-37. The articles were presented with the intent of using Mead's insights to help American women understand how Mead's experiences as an anthropologist could contribute to the American understanding of how to raise healthy and emotionally well-adjusted children. The articles were also designed to help women understand and cope with the changing status of women in American culture and provide guidance and encouragement as they began to balance motherhood with new career opportunities.

[113] Mead, *New Lives for Old*, 248. For more on the proliferation of children and family studies in the postwar era see Margo Horn, *Before It's Too Late: The Child Guidance Movement in the United States, 1922-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Kathleen W. Jones, *Taming the Troublesome Child: American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). For a history of developmental psychology see the collected essays in *Beyond the Century of the Child: Cultural History and Developmental Psychology*, ed. Willem Koops and Michael Zuckerman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Hamilton Cravens, *Before Head Start: The Iowa Station and America's Children* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); *Small Worlds: Children and Adolescents in America, 1850-1950*, ed. Elliot West and Paula Petrik (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

of *Male and Female*, Mead had contributed the "valuable reminder that the [cultural] attitude of our own society has no special validity just because it is ours."[114] Culture he observed was a matter of human artifice. Moreover,

> [Mead's] anthropological studies have led her beyond all simple theories of economic and social determination to a recognition of the almost unbelievable range of cultural possibilities open to man, each in its own way a creative work of art -- a unitary presentation of how to be human. And she believes in applied anthropology and in the possibility and in the possibility of action, through the building up of a positive cultural pattern and ideal with its own stability and its own dynamism.[115]

An awareness of cultural diversity and malleability, Mead told her readers, was a distinct advantage for Americans whose social patterns had yet to take shape. Clearly, American patterns of living were not set in stone; they had developed according to specific environmental and social conditions.[116] Furthermore, when considering regional patterns of community and culture within America, Mead argued, the concept of a universal or *natural* state of human nature looked even less tenable. Mead suggested to her readers that, with the aid of social science, Americans could design new strategies for living, i. e., "develop and elaborate this precious system of invention and social practice that man alone of all living things has begun."[117] The new rule of American culture, it seemed, was *adaptability*. This required the loosening of traditional social categories and mores.[118]

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[114] Julian Huxley, "Human Relations," review of *Male and Female*, by Margaret Mead, *The Spectator* 184 (February 10, 1950): 184.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Mead, "Male and Female," *Ladies Home Journal*, 135.

[117] Ibid., 144

[118] Ibid., 153.

For Mead, American cultural change was best represented in gender roles. In the 1950s women were finding their way into higher education and the professional work force. Recent scholarship on women activists during the 1950s has dispelled the assumption that Cold War social conservatism and containment kept women squarely in their domestic roles. Joanne Meyerowitz and other historians of women in the postwar era have amassed considerable evidence on women's advocacy movements in labor and the professions during the 1950s that effectively debunks assumptions that some historians have accepted without qualification.[119] Further, these studies show that the drive for representation in the workforce, although not yet politically feminist, nevertheless crossed racial and cultural divides to bring women from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds together.[120]

Indeed, as labor historian Susan Hartmann has demonstrated, the support for women in business and industry was more extensive than previously thought. An expanding economy created a need for more personnel. Women's employment levels went back up to their wartime height by the mid-1950s. Organizations such as the National Manpower Council, the American Nurses Association, the YWCA, and a special Commission on the Education of Women sponsored by the American Council on

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[119] See *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) and Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

[120] For background on women in the work force during World War Two see Ruth Milkman, *Gender At Work: The Dynamic of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). For a broad history on the changes in sex roles in American culture in the twentieth century see the volume of essays, *Gender in American History Since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh (New York: Routledge, 1993); Amy S. Green, "Savage Childhood: The Scientific Construction of Girlhood and Boyhood in the Progressive Era" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1995).

Education, among other organizations, lobbied aggressively on issues of women's employment and child care, as well as against sex and race-based discrimination.[121]

Still, the conflicting cultural messages that women often encountered about their place in postwar American society belied the persistent mandate that women guard and preserve their traditional roles as mothers and caretakers in the nuclear family unit. Wife and mother vs. independent, educated worker/producer -- this, Mead said, was the conundrum for women in the postwar era. Attempts by women to take on new career paths often were met with public criticism in the mass media. Like other 'second class' Americans, such as youth, minorities, immigrants, and the poor, women faced a postwar culture where full participation paradoxically was both praised and criticized.

The continued inequities, in contrast to emancipation, faced by women and minorities in America also reflected a stark contrast in the 1950s between the propaganda of American democracy, and the reality of discrimination. Women, Mead observed, were expected to embrace their new roles in the American work force while maintaining their old status as mothers and domestic caretakers. Similarly, young people, minorities and immigrants were taught that full social participation and opportunity were theirs for the taking; yet stereotypes and prejudices often dictated otherwise.[122] The hypocrisy, xenophobia, and containment tendencies of American society during the Cold War era, Mead observed, kept Americans from realizing the dream of a true democracy.

> The fresh bright dreams of a system based on a belief that all men are created equal and with an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, on which our American democracy is based, have been

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[121] Susan M. Hartmann, "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years," in Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver*, 84-102.

[122] Mead, *Male and Female*, 445.

> compromised from the beginning by the existence of slavery, a general political and snobbish intolerance toward people of other races, creeds, and nations, and by a tendency to interpret our political forms and the accidents of our particular way of life as having wider and more universal qualities than they have, so that we often insist, with the voice of the cultist preacher, that the rest of the world, of they who would share our wealth and our know-how, must adopt our manners and morals.[123]

Such ethnocentrism, Mead continued, also perpetuated what in American anthropology and social science had been the well-worn assumptions of universality and standardization in human personality and potential, or, conversely, those hierarchies of human potential grounded in theories of race and gender. This scientific chauvinism, Mead suggested, may have stemmed from cultural resistance to examining the self through the lens of world cultures.

In *Male and Female* and the rest of her popular science writing during the 1950s, Mead lobbied for expanded social roles for women as well as changes in traditional models of family, community, and the individual. Not only was the ability to revise American social mores scientifically demonstrable, it was a social imperative if true democracy in America was to be realized. As one reviewer for the popular intellectual magazine, *The Survey*, paraphrased Mead, the "plea" was to, "let us have fully realized human beings contributing to society, not manikins typed by inappropriate extensions of sex differences."[124] Mead's message in *Male and Female* was that the process of social change itself held the key to expanding human potential. The parents of the next generation in the 1950s were very important in this respect, Mead said, since they seemed,

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[123] Ibid.

[124] Cora du Bois, "An Anthropologist on Sex," review of *Male and Female*, by Margaret Mead, *The Survey* 85 (October, 1949): 554-55. See page 555.

> Primarily ... concerned with their children as persons, as little potential bundles of high achievement, who must be given the very best chance, the best education, the best habit training, for success in life. Life [for postwar Americans] is a race that both boys and girls must run...[125]

Any plan that resorted to coercion (as with fascism or communism, or hard-line technocracy) was doomed to repeat the mistakes of the Depression and the World Wars.[126] If these pitfalls could be avoided, Mead thought,

> Then we [might] have what we may call world religions, world political and technological systems, systems with potential universality, whose claim to universality is based on a willingness to share what they have obtained by revelation or invention with all members of the human race.

There perhaps could be universality in social science methodology after all, but not of the mechanistic variety. Such a methodology would be based on the universal recognition of diversity of culture and human behavior, and of the need for a collaborative approach to their study.

Here again was Mead's plea for model for a new science of culture -- an interdisciplinary and international science that celebrated and encouraged the free exchange of information about how each culture, each context of human experience, held within it an endless treasure trove of human potentialities that could be tapped to realize American democracy. Social science itself would reflect democratic values. Exploring the potentiality of the self was after all for Mead a practice in bringing together objective and subjective descriptions of the evolutionary, biological, physiological, psychological, and cultural aspects of human behavior. Interdisciplinarity and diversity of perspective, as envisioned in the original personality and culture seminars at Columbia and Yale in the

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[125] Ibid., 283.

[126] Ibid., 455.

1930s, had always been Mead's goal for a new social science of democratic social reform.

Human Nature and Adaptive Potential: Postwar Scientific Perspectives

As indicated in this and previous chapters, a predominant theme running through debates about human nature and the future of democracy in the postwar era is the concept of *adaptation*. Despite obvious differences in the way Mead and Skinner each conceived of the self, they nevertheless both embraced a basic behavioral orientation to the individual in society. Human beings, indeed all organisms, were shaped fundamentally by environmental conditions. This had long since been confirmed by urban trends in the last century and a half, and by the rise of social evolutionary theory. Skinner and Mead both concerned themselves with how humans should adapt to new cultural frameworks, social roles for the sexes, and patterns of family, work, and community. Adaptability became the central rule for Americans in the postwar era.

Aside from its political and social dimensions born of war, modernization, and economic expansion, the concept of adaptation in social science also had strong connections to the Evolutionary Synthesis in biology, to the new sciences of ecosystems ecology and cybernetics, and to information theory in cognitive psychology that took shape in the postwar decades. By this time social evolutionary theory had moved away from the strong environmental determinism implied by social Darwinism in the nineteenth-century. The recognition of individual agency and group cooperation in

processes of change in nature and culture led to cross-fertilization between the biological and social sciences in the opening decades of the twentieth century.[127]

This was also true for anthropology and psychology. In the area of cognitive science, for example, evolutionary concepts were used by one of its founders, Herbert Simon, in modeling human nature on computers and machine systems where environmental feedback modified internal decision-making procedures (programs) to produce any number of complex and subtle behavioral adjustments.[128] The predominant environment for modern humanity, as Hunter Crowther-Heyck has noted, was mass society and the bureaucratic complex.[129]

Mead and Skinner represent opposing scientific approaches to the self in social science. Both visions of human nature, however, reflected a basic acceptance of the

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[127] For background on the Evolutionary Synthesis see Joseph A. Cain, "Common Problems and Cooperative Solutions: Organizational Activity in Evolutionary Studies, 1936-1947," *Isis* 84 (1993): 1-25; John C. Greene, "From Huxley to Huxley: Transformations in the Darwinian Credo," in *Science, Ideology, and World View: Essays in the History of Evolutionary Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Peter Bowler, "The Evolutionary Synthesis," in *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 307-18; Vassaliki Smocovitis, "Unifying Biology: The Evolutionary Synthesis and Evolutionary Biology," *Journal of the History of Biology* 26 (1992): 1-65. For an overview of the connections between evolutionary theory, human ethics, and ecological theory see Gregg Mitman's study of Warder Clyde Allee and ecological theory at the University of Chicago in *The State of Nature: Ecology, Community, and American Social Thought, 1900-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). For a history on the connections between evolutionary theory and cybernetics, see Donna J. Haraway, "The High Cost of Information in Post-World War II Evolutionary Biology: Ergonomics, Semiotics, and the Sociobiology of Communication Systems," *Philosophical Forum* 13 (1981-82): 244-78. On ecosystem ecology see Joel B. Hagen "A Rational Field Physiology," in *An Entangled Bank: The Origins of Ecosystem Ecology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 15-32; Chunglin Kwa, "Radiation Ecology, Systems Ecology, and the Management of the Environment," in *Science and Nature: Essays in the History of the Environmental Sciences*, ed. Michael Shortland (Oxford: Alden Press, 1993), 213-50. For the influence of cybernetics and systems theory on psychology, see Hunter Crowther-Heyck's biography of Herbert Simon in his forthcoming book, *Organization Man*.

[128] Hunter Crowther-Heyck, *Organization Man*, 538 (typescript).

[129] Ibid., 541-42. The idea of individuals and society, machines within machines, stems back to the mechanical worldview of the Enlightenment. In its modern postwar incarnation, the connection between individual and society was grounded in analogies from physiology, ecology, and cybernetics, fields that were linked closely to one another through the new computer-oriented science of systems theory. In the organic microcosm of the individual, as well as the physical macrocosm of the bureaucratic society,

modern bureaucratic worldview, especially when Mead and Skinner turned to the consideration of humanity's *adaptive potential*, both individual and collective, and to evaluating systems of social management and democracy. Simon, Skinner, and to a lesser extent, Mead, also used the concept of Darwinian natural selection to describe how human adaptation to the social world took place; behaviors that were advantageous to the self in adjusting to family, school, and community were selected out by the environment, and also, in Mead perspective, by individuals themselves. Indeed, the key difference between Mead's and Skinner's conceptualization of adaptive human potential was the presence/absence in the individual of independent choice, freedom, and agency. While Mead's holistic vision of the self celebrated these aspects of human nature, Skinner's mechanistic approach dismissed them altogether. To this extent, Skinner's view of the individual, who is entirely controlled by environment, put certain limitations on the adaptive potential of the self, whereas Mead's anthropology of self-actualization freed the individual to make choices about behavior and about the design of environments. Skinner's social vision, as I have argued, moreover, was technocratic, while Mead's was democratic.

Both Skinner and Mead referred to the idea of human potential, but they did so using very different assumptions about the role of cognition and culture in shaping individual behaviors and social roles. What distinguished Mead's anthropological approach was her view that human nature, in all its varied manifestations throughout the world, was fundamentally an expression of the complex dimensions of culture. Although Skinner considered the social and historical dimensions of postwar American culture in

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systems worked toward homeostasis and equilibrium through adaptation to new conditions. See Crowther-Heyck, *Organization Man*, 544-45.

promulgating his vision of a behaviorist-inspired technocracy (by way of his utopia), he removed mind, personality, and cultural history from his *experimental* view of humanity. Skinner felt that the behavioral potential of human organisms, their ability to adapt to complex arrays of environmental contingencies, was limitless. But his view of humanity was very limited in scope, one that did not involve recognition of internal hierarchies of consciousness and cognition. Mead's view of human potential, on the other hand, sprang from the complex and multi-layered inner and outer worlds of the self, where cognition, experience, mentality, and culture all played a hand in adapting the individual to different social and environmental conditions. Mead's scientific view of the multi-layered self, moreover, recognized the agency of individual human beings in controlling the development of their potentiality, whereas Skinner's vision of the programmable self did not.

Mead counted many psychologists among her cohort of collaborators in her culture and personality studies. The theories of humanist psychologists such as Lawrence Frank, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Gardner Murphy, for example, influenced Mead's construction of the holistic self in cultural anthropology. For her ideas on adaptation and human potential, Mead drew inspiration from, among other sources, the theories of the personality psychologist, Gardner Murphy.[130] Murphy and Mead shared similar convictions about the need for interdisciplinary techniques in the study of

[130] As a central pioneer of the psychology of perception and personality, and a progressive science compatriot of Mead's, Gardner Murphy was best known for theories of human personality that entailed both a biological/evolutionary and social interpretation of individual mental development. Murphy's work on human perception and personality at the City College of New York in the 1940s culminated in his monumental work of 1947, *Personality: A Biosocial Approach to Origins and Structure*, which became a landmark in the psychology of personality. See Gardner Murphy, *Personality: A Biosocial Approach to Origins and Structure* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947).

human nature, and about the dangers of experimental methodologies that reduced the study of humanity, as Skinner had, to statistical quantification.

Mead and Murphy viewed the individual as a *work in progress* -- a complex of activities constantly in evolution -- rather than as an entity with a finite and fixed set of capacities.[131] Human life had no standard architecture for Mead; it changed and transformed over the course of time. Akin to Mead's theories of individual development in primitive culture, Gardner Murphy's trademark 'field theory' of personality accommodated the multiple levels of interaction that he felt existed between the nexus of inner and outer activity that defined the individual, and the surrounding fields of activity in the physical, biological, and social environment.[132] This interaction, Murphy, and Mead, believed, shaped the development of perception and personality for each individual, a dimension of the self that Skinner's view of the adaptive individual did not recognize. The concept of the active self as a field of activity interacting with the

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[131] Such an approach to personality stood in sharp contrast to traditions in the social sciences during the 1920s and 30s that favored the study of aggregate groups and the standardization of mental and personal traits through statistical analysis. See, for example, Kurt Danziger, "Investigating Persons," in *Constructing the Subject: Historical Origins of Psychological Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 156-78; and Katherine Pandora, "Defying the Law of Averages: Constructing a Science of Individuality," in *Rebels Within the Ranks: Psychologists' Critique of Scientific Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 61-89.

[132] See Murphy's article, "Kurt Lewin and Field Theory," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* 30 (1966), 358-67. As Murphy observed in this retrospective, Kurt Lewin was a leading American proponent of Gestalt psychology in the 1920s and 30s and believed that perception and thought were not brain processes that could be explained simply as combinations of individual impressions. Along with German Gestalt theorists Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler, Lewin believed that the integration of such impressions created a new level of understanding not reducible to its component parts. Using the concept of the 'field' borrowed from physics, Lewin furthered Gestalt theory by applying the mathematics of topology as well as concepts of space to the study of mental development and perception. Lewin introduced the idea of the "life space" as a way of conceptualizing individual psychology and the processes of differentiation and perceptual formation. See Kurt Lewin, *A Dynamic Theory of Personality* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1935). For more on Murphy's impressions of Gestalt Psychology and its challenge to older mechanistic and behaviorist traditions in psychology, see his article, "The Geometry of Mind," *Harper's Magazine* 163 (1931): 584-93. For more on the history of the German tradition in Gestalt psychology, see the recent study by Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

environment also distinguished Mead's view of the evolution of the individual as a an adaptive process from Skinner's.

The most pressing task in cultivating human adaptive potential, as both Mead and Murphy argued, was to create environments that encouraged people to look beyond their individual and social maps of reality and cultivate new cognitive skills and perspectives. The cultivation of mental and intellectual *creativity* was of utmost importance. Whereas Skinner's behavioral theories had stressed precise controls in eliciting useful behaviors, Murphy and Mead's personality theories argued for a science of the self that would free human potential by applying cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary approaches to educating children in the home and classroom. Whereas Skinner spoke of changing the environmental contingencies in the laboratory through manipulative technology, Mead and Murphy advocated experiential diversity for children in *learning*, which was in their view the central mechanism of individual adaptation.[133] Most research on personality during the 1930s was laboratory-based and had not, Murphy felt, addressed its true origins. In the works of Ruth Benedict and Mead, however, Murphy saw a means to correct this deficiency by demonstrating how cultural context shaped personality. The

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[133] Having minored in anthropology at Harvard in 1916, Murphy became familiar early on with the Boasian school. Murphy had discussed cross-cultural anthropology with Boas himself in the early 1920s at Columbia as a graduate student, and he was deeply influenced by Boas' perspectives on human nature. Murphy later read Mead's first book, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* (New York: Morrow, 1928), and was a strong supporter of her comparative approach to cultural analysis. He appreciated Mead's emphasis on the malleability of human nature and the relationship between personality and its cultural milieu. See Lois B Murphy, Lois B. Murphy, *Gardner Murphy: Integrating, Expanding, and Humanizing Psychology* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1990), 102.

combination of insights on personality from various sources in social science, moreover, Murphy hoped, would help refocus the psychological study of the self in general.[134]

Given all the multifarious interactions between (and within) the individual and the surrounding social and physical environment, the standard view of perception, as simply the "mediation" of the inner and outer world of the self, had never made sense to Murphy or Mead. 'Sensing' the world, perceiving and understanding reality, was no mere function of the sense organs or the brain. The "dynamic personality" -- possessed of a myriad of memories, experiences, tastes, values, needs, and talents -- reflected the process of "sifting" out a reality that was unique for each person. Perceiving, as William James had observed, was not simply unconscious information gathering, but rather a *process of learning*, i. e., of integrating, relating and organizing new experiences into the fluid matrix of the holistic self.[135]

As with Mead's cultural anthropology, Murphy's Neo-Jamesian and interdisciplinary approach to human perception inspired his experimental research on

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[134] One of the prominent facilitators of the Yale seminars in culture and personality during the1930s, the psychologist, Lawrence K. Frank, had brought Murphy and Mead together on many occasions during the 1940s for discussions about personality. Like Mead, Frank had been an influential proponent of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research in the social sciences and was well known for his application of personality research to education theory and human relations studies, and most importantly, child development studies. These collaborations deeply influenced Murphy's thought on personality formation. For more Lawrence K. Frank see *Fundamental Needs of the Child* (New York: New York Committee on Mental Hygiene of the State Charities Aid Association, 1938) and *Individual Development* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955).

[135] For more on James and his ideas of experience and the self, see Eugene Taylor's *William James on Exceptional Mental States: The 1896 Lowell Lectures (*New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982) and *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1996). As historian Katherine Pandora has demonstrated, Murphy's perspective on perception had its roots in his early exposure to the psychological theories of William James and the philosophy of radical empiricism. Having also spent his career criticizing scientific practices that narrowed psychological inquiry, James was a forerunner in lobbying against mechanistic depictions of the self that hampered consideration of the rich diversity of human experience. The function of considering the unconscious mind was for James, and Murphy, a means of uncovering the vast storehouse of hidden ability in human cognition underneath the conscious mind. See Katherine Pandora, *Rebels Within the Ranks: Psychologists' Critique of Scientific Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

how manipulating basic human motivations and needs could induce perceptual distortions. Such experiments demonstrated that perception was, again, a dynamic *process* of selecting and integrating new impressions and sensations into the matrix of the self. In this sense, Murphy's perception theory was somewhat similar to Herbert Simon's computer model of mentality. Perception was an ever-evolving construction of individual mental architecture through continual adjustment to changing environmental and social conditions. Murphy's perception theories thus integrated the physiological, neurological, mental, cognitive, social, and bio-evolutionary elements of human experience in a theory of the *self as evolutionary process* from infancy to adulthood. The self was a *fluid* entity. In fact, as fully evidenced by Mead's anthropology, there were at least as many selves, natures, personalities, and characters, as there were cultures in the world. Their vision of the self also implied individual agency in the process of adapting to a changing social environment. As I have argued, however, radical behaviorists such as Skinner had abandoned traditional concepts of the autonomous self for something far worse -- no self at all.

As Skinner, Mead and Murphy might have agreed, there were advantages in constructing new models of the self in a era dominated by the concepts of change, social adjustment and adaptation, concepts that had fundamentally challenged previous scientific assumptions about intelligence, creativity, and overall human potential. As Mead and Murphy had argued, however, the processes of personality development involved the evolution of an individual reality for each person, modified in turn by cultural experience. As Mead had shown, different cultural values and conceptions of individuality, social roles, family, and community all factored in to how the self evolves

through individual adaptation to the cultural environment. Moreover, Mead had argued that a social democracy was the best system of social management in which to cultivate human adaptive potential to the fullest.

Conclusion

In the careers of Mead and Skinner we are confronted with contrasting perspectives on how best to construct a science of society, and of the self. In contrast to Skinnerian models of mechanistic humanity, Mead's depiction of the individual as a vast wellspring of potentialities celebrated human uniqueness and diversity in defiance of the standardized self. Clearly in Mead we also see a progressive legacy in her science (but not radical politics) of social planning and reform in service (but not in charge) of democracy.

Mead, Skinner, and other social scientists took advantage of the growing public recognition of social science during the early 1940s in marketing scientific wares. Mead marketed her vision through committee participation and carefully crafted publications that were geared to governmental and public interests. Her interdisciplinary and collaborative studies of national character also did much to illustrate the professional advantages of re-integrating the specialties and, as in the British social welfare system, become a true participant in American culture, a politically and socially relevant force in social administration.

Moreover, as she asserted time and again, Mead wanted social science to reflect democratic values. In Mead's view, social science possessed inherent moral and political

dimensions. Its architecture and purpose, as well as its methodologies and products, did not flow from universal templates of humanity or culture, but were shaped themselves by the social patterns of the culture that produced them. For Mead, scientific depictions of the self and of human potentiality were intertwined deeply with the cause against gender and racial discrimination, with the lessons of war, and with the future evolution of democracy. In vying for her vision of a science of culture, and of cultural engineering, Mead understood that scientific depictions of the self would have tremendous implications for the future of social administration, and for American society. Recognition of this fact encouraged those like Mead and Skinner to pursue careers as public intellectuals in the postwar decades.

The issue of how Mead and Skinner came to design and market scientific knowledge products to a public audience, as I have argued, has not been addressed adequately. Micaela di Leonardo has made the most productive inroads to date in considering this dynamic for Mead. In assessing the "commodification" of the primitive "other," di Leonardo displays the marketing choices that Mead made in catering to American political, social, and moral sensibilities. Indeed di Leonardo notes that, despite Mead's present-day reputation as a champion of feminism and the counter-culture, Mead thought of herself as a "modernist," i. e., a pro-government advocate of democracy, rather than of social radicalism. Her presentation of the primitive self was intended to help educate Americans about how they might make their own society better by exploring the diversity of human potential and patterns of culture. Mead was one of the very first, di Leonardo notes, to use ethnography for this purpose, to sell modernity and help

Americans "rationalize ongoing shifts in American culture."[136] Mead chose in her early work to address issues of racism, sexual discrimination, and changes in the family through the study and presentation of primitive culture, subtly suggesting comparisons rather than a direct confrontation with mainstream American values.

In the present thesis the dynamic between science and its public is explored with regard to images of individuality and the self. Further consideration of Mead's public career is necessary in order to illuminate the differences between Mead's own designs on her public image, and the manner in which Americans appropriated and transformed this image. These aspects of Mead's mass marketing of social reform and social engineering in the postwar decades need to be more adequately explored than they have been in recent scholarship. It is to these considerations that I will turn next.

[136] di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home*, 172-73.

CHAPTER FIVE

A GENERATION POISED FOR POTENTIAL: MEAD AND THE CULTIVATION OF THE SELF IN POSTWAR AMERICAN CULTURE

Unless one is continually assaying the current experience of children as they are growing up, one gets further and further away from them.... In a prefigurative society, the condition of the youngest members becomes a necessary component of learning. The children are our source of inspiration today in their fresh perception of a new world..

~ Margaret Mead, 1970[1]

Lots of old sayings don't have to be repeated but
there is one that has got to,
Which is that it is much better to get old than it is
not to,
And while getting old, to leave off counting
wrinkles and birthdays and bereavements,
And rack up a record of solid achievements.
Pick up a ruler, Ye of Little Faith,
And Ye shall see that Margaret Mead takes up four
inches in Who's Who, while Richard Nixon
has but one-and-one-eighth!

~ 1970 From a Metropolitan Museum of Art tribute poem for Mead[2]

During the 1950s and 60s Margaret Mead employed her wealth of research and her growing public rapport as a scientific expert to discuss the American self. In what for Mead became a formidable résumé of books, lectures, articles, reviews, and addresses in the postwar decades, she, like Skinner, attempted to show that the social environment shaped Americans to a considerable extent. Mead invoked the 'laboratory of primitive society' to evaluate Western models of gender, race, marriage and the family, and she encouraged Americans to confront the tentative nature of their own postwar culture. Like

[1] David Dempsey, "A Talk With Margaret Mead," in the article "The Mead and Her Message," in *The New York Times Magazine* (April 26, 1970): 23, 74-79, 82, 99-103. See page 23.

[2] Vivien Leone, "Margaret Mead: Coming of Age at the Met," in the *Manhattan Tribune* 2, no. 37 (August 8, 1970): 5.

Skinner, Mead focused on the subjects of child rearing, youth, and institutionalized education as forums for her rhetoric on social reform. Mead's cultural anthropology, however, could not offer the practical expediency that was symbolized in Skinner's technologies of behavioral modification. In her own campaign for a science of social reform, Mead instead focused on discussing how to create the interpersonal conditions in the family and the community that she felt could enhance individual human potential and creativity.

Postwar social scientists had a vested interest in raising public awareness about both the reality and the benefits of *social change*; it worked to their professional advantage. As we have seen in the popular writing of Skinner, Mead, and other social scientists, the rhetoric of social change and transformation was designed purposely to link together the authority of social scientists and the future of the nation. Just as progressive social scientists at the turn of the century took the opportunity to align themselves with different branches of political and managerial reform, postwar social scientists positioned themselves as indispensable experts to government agencies, industry, and the public. The public demand for guidance on how to properly raise and educate the postwar generation unquestionably created new opportunities for social scientists like Mead.

The conservatism of early 1950s mass culture in America, however, forced Mead in certain instances to modify her advice literature in order to accommodate conventional values and ideas about the self. Later on, Mead took advantage of new opportunities during the social protest movements of the 1960s to market her scientific and theoretical wares. With the rising outcry against the Vietnam War, and increased public awareness of environmental pollution, racism, urban decay, and youth rebellion, many Americans

questioned the soundness of a society that appeared to be on the road to collapse. In response, they often turned to public intellectuals like Mead for guidance. Americans in the 1960s increasingly were receptive to Mead's humanistic and liberal-democratic vision of the self. Although Mead had attracted the ire of some activists in the feminist and civil rights communities who accused her of pandering to traditional conventions, she nevertheless enjoyed widespread appeal in the counterculture and among educators. With the subsequent publication of her social manifestos in the early 1970s, Mead solidified her position in American culture as an icon of anthropology, a "grandmother" to the world, and a sage of liberal-progressive counterculture.[3]

The present chapter has several objectives. In the first part I will examine the scientific and popular reaction to Mead's seminal texts of the 1930s and 40s. Her more prosaic and relaxed style of science writing for popular audiences in the *Growing Up in Samoa* and *Sex and Temperament* in the 1930s met with predictable criticism from some of Mead's peers in anthropology. They opposed Mead's lack of scientific formalism in presenting her research to a popular audience. Moreover, her tendency to mix ethnology with highly interpretive analogies to Western culture left many scientists feeling that Mead had overstepped the professional bounds of anthropology considerably. Similar professional criticism met Mead's *And Keep Your Powder Dry* and *Male and Female* in the 1940s and 50s. This criticism of Mead's books was overshadowed, however, by their public popularity. Social scientists sympathetic to Mead's journey into public discourse praised her use of anthropology to critique Western social patterns. And the public

[3] This characterization was used to describe Mead's iconic status in an obituary entitled "Grandmother of Us All." See the Margaret Mead Papers, Columbia University Archives. Columbia University, New York, NY. See also a similar characterization in "Margaret Mead Today: Mother to the World," *Time* 93 (March 21, 1969): 74.

enthusiasm for her books helped establish Mead as a scientific expert in the public consciousness.

Secondly, I will examine how Mead's critique of American social mores, cultural categories, and representations of the self in *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at American Society* (1942), *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (1949), and *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation -- Manus, 1928-1953* (1952), gave way in the late 1950s and early 1960s to her 'expert' recommendations for institutionalized education, family studies, and parenting. Mead's anti-isolationist cajoling in *Powder* about mobilizing American national character, and her somewhat mixed messages about child rearing and female potentiality in *Male and Female*, will be considered here with regard to her careful negotiation of the political economy of American social conventions. Mead's emphasis on change, adaptation, and social transformation in her portrayal of native peoples in the Admiralty Islands (the Manus) will also be addressed as an example of the kind of strategies that social scientists employed to manufacture and/or enhance a public consciousness about social change in the American context. In her 1956 book *New Lives for Old*, Mead presented an anthropological account of primitive utopia in the Manus islands in New Guinea. She hoped to convince Americans with this story that rapid social transition in a ready-made laboratory of culture was neither counterproductive to democracy, nor an impediment to a people thriving in an environment of constant flux. Mead's vision of human nature, filled with endless possibilities for adaptation, was crafted to fit the public demand for increased human potential in the scientific, cultural, military, and economic "races" of the Cold War era. A discussion of what Mead felt the individual child -- the postwar self --

would need in order to maximize creative potential will be contrasted with Skinner's prescriptions for the self during the same period.

In the third part of this discussion I will examine Mead's promotion of real-world reforms to contemporary patterns of family, child rearing, community and institutionalized education during the 1950s. In Mead's committee work, lectures, and popular writing from this period, the influence of personality psychology and psychotherapy on her representations of the holistic self are evident. Increased exposure to social change, community participation, and different cultural traditions, Mead thought, were vital in fostering the creativity that young people would need to engage the emerging social frontiers of postwar America. Public education in particular, Mead argued, was in need of innovation. Schools needed to dispense with artificial divisions like age and grade, and also have young people participate more fully in their communities.

In the fourth part of this treatment I will move to a fuller discussion of how Mead's vision of the self was appropriated and critiqued by those seeking fresh perspectives on the individual for personal fulfillment and political ends. In an attempt to expand on the historiographic foundations laid by historians Fred Matthews, Micaela di Leonardo, and others, I will examine the public reception and appropriation of Mead's visions of the self among different communities in American postwar culture. Mead's opinions will be examined with regard to the youth counterculture and the feminist community, both of which expanded in the 1960s and early 70s. Examining the feminist critique of Mead's anthropology illustrates how she carefully marketed human potentiality to reflect both revolutionary and traditional concepts of gender. Betty

Friedan's criticism of Mead in the early 1960s laid bare some of the conflicting visions of humanity in Mead's work. Friedan's attack on Mead also illustrates how scientific depictions of the self were politicized and incorporated into public debate over such issues as feminism and civil rights. In the case of youth counterculture, a generation of new radicals seeking social alternatives and self-actualization championed Mead's liberal perspectives on marriage, sexuality, community living, and education. I will also address these and other examples of appropriation in considering the state of the self in social science and society at the end of the 1970s.

Finally, I will end with a general appraisal of Mead's popular currency in the late 1960s and early 70s. By this time Mead was known worldwide as a scientist and public intellectual, as well as an icon of feminism, liberal democracy, and 1960s counterculture. Mead's public image will be compared to her own personal reflections on her place as a scientist and public intellectual in postwar era. Mead wrote about the images of science and scientists in the popular media. A comparison of her public image with that of B. F. Skinner illustrates the ways in which personifications of science also affected the popular appropriation of the self.

Mead and Pop Anthropology in the 1930s

In her famous books of the 1920s and 30s, *Growing Up in Samoa*, *Growing Up in New Guinea*, and *Sex and Temperament*, Mead used the test cases of adolescence and gender in different cultures to critique Western concepts of society and the individual. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mead wrote these books in a relaxed, prosaic style

that both professional and lay reviewers recognized as a bold departure from traditional science writing. Mead wrote the books specifically for a popular readership, deliberately leaving out much of the dry, tedious data analysis and language of anthropological research. These books conveyed important messages about human potential from the viewpoint of an expert in the field. In them Mead departed from objective science by suggesting that there were moral and social lessons to be learned from social science about how Westerners might better raise their children and run their communities. Some reviewers unsurprisingly rejected Mead's unorthodox presentations and warned of the risk to her scientific reputation in doing so. Most however were enthusiastic about Mead's attempts to make the human sciences useful and relevant to American life. An appraisal of the professional and popular reception of Mead's first books in the 1930s in the present chapter will be important in considering both the Interwar and postwar evolution of Mead's career as a public intellectual. Surveying the popular response to these early works will also be necessary in explaining how Mead modified her scientific concepts of self and human potential in these decades to accommodate changes in the politics of social reform among her public audiences.

Mead left herself open to the criticism that her studies were "given too much to interpretation instead of description," and lacked the impartiality befitting an anthropologist.[4] Her attempts to combine the techniques of anthropology, ethnology, sociology, psychology, and psychiatry in writing about individual character and temperament in primitive cultures also left some academics skeptical about her

[4] Fred Matthews, "The Utopia of Human Relations," 347; Joseph Wood Krutch, "Men and Women," review of *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, by Margaret Mead, *The Nation* 140 (May 29, 1935): 634-35. See page 634.

comparisons to Western society.[5] The sociologist Robert Redfield, for example, cited Mead's "laboratory exercise" style of ethnography, where a narrow line of inquiry (into adolescence in this case) was used selectively to extrapolate "Q.E.D." conclusions about Samoan culture. Mead seemed to be focusing on "problems and cases, not [the whole of] human nature." Mead also seemed intent, as Joseph Wood Krutch quipped, on advancing a "thesis" about Western culture and human malleability in studying Samoan culture.[6]

Many other social scientists and intellectuals also expressed reservations about Mead's reform-oriented subtexts, her moralizing about American shortcomings, and her agenda for social reform. But most non-professional readers appreciated her "directness and lack of [scientific] convention," as a welcome departure from "dull" science writing.[7] Mead was indeed moving beyond the borderlands of the academic world and into public arenas. Her accounts of the South Seas, primitive cultures, and strange customs read like the enchanting tales of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'travel' writers. One reviewer likened Mead's tales to the exotic and fascinating portrayals of "far away native life," in Robert Flaherty's hugely successful documentary films, *Nanook of the North* and *Moana*.[8] Mead's descriptions seemed less like anthropological accounts and more akin to the fanciful, bizarre, albeit fictional adventures of Lewis Carroll's, *Alice in*

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[5] Nels Anderson, "In the Light of Samoa," review of *Growing Up in Samoa*, by Margaret Mead, *The Survey* 61 (January 15, 1929): 514-15; Joseph W. Krutch, "Men and Women," 634. See also the extended essay on Mead's methodology in *Sex and Temperament* by Jessie Bernard, "Observations and Generalizations in Cultural Anthropology," *The American Journal of Sociology* 50 (July, 1944-May, 1945): 284-91.

[6] Robert Redfield, review of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, by Margaret Mead, *The American Journal of Sociology* 34 (January, 1939): 728-29; Joseph Wood Krutch, "Men and Women," 634.

[7] "Primitive Life in New Guinea," review of *Growing Up in New Guinea*, by Margaret Mead, *The New York Times Book Review* (November 16, 1930): 22.

[8] Isidor Schneider, "Manus and Americans," review of *Growing Up in New Guinea*, by Margaret Mead, *The New Republic* 64 (November 5, 1930): 330.

Wonderland. Her idyllic tales of social harmony and contentedness among the Samoans also were reminiscent of Samuel Butler's fictional utopia, *Erehwon.*[9] Others found Mead's many comparisons of the Manus and Westerners curiously similar to the "Puritans of Oceania" in Jonathan Swift's social satire, *Gulliver's Travels.*[10] Her "impressionistic" presentation of ethnography with lively and engaging descriptions prompted one reviewer to ask derisively whether Mead's appeals to "students of society" were meant to be "a contribution to science or art?"[11]

The consensus among professional social scientists and many mainstream literary reviewers was that Mead had, as Robert H. Lowie observed, "deliberately set herself a task distinct from that of the traditional ethnographer's." Mead had ushered in a new vista in ethnographic methodology by "[i]gnoring the conventional descriptive pattern," of the anthropologist and highlighting the dimensions of culture-patterning embodied in the "*individual's* reactions to his social setting."[12] With her early focus on specific topics such as gender and adolescence, personality molding in children, and the development of social roles, Mead's studies, as many social scientists pointed out, were not merely conventional collections of factual data about Samoan, Arapesh, Tcambuli, or Manus life. With her use of both projective and personality tests to examine temperament, science

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[9] Joseph Wood Krutch, "Men and Women," 634.

[10] Isidor Schneider, "Manus and Americans," 330.

[11] Nels Andersen, "In the Light of Samoa," 514.

[12] Italics mine. See Robert H. Lowie, review of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, by Margaret Mead, *The American Anthropologist* 31 (July, 1929): 532-34. See page 532. See also the comments to this effect by Robert Redfield in his review of *Samoa* for *The American Journal of Sociology* 34 (January, 1929): 728-30. See pages 728-29. Hortense Powdermaker of the Yale Institute of Human Relations also pointed to Mead's liberal use of psychiatric concepts in *Sex and Temperament.* See her review in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 181 (September, 1935): 221-22. See page 221.

critics recognized that Mead had pioneered the psychological examination of cultural patterns through the lens of representative individuals. Many social scientists hailed this as a novel and powerful approach, "bound to find followers and to yield an ever richer harvest," as Lowie commented, of insight into the diversity of human nature.[13]

One reviewer of *Sex and Temperament* for the *Saturday Evening Post* observed, however, that Mead had not discovered cultural relativity. Hortense Powdermaker of the Yale Institute of Human Relations noted that by the mid-1930s this concept had been well known already for "at least half a century." Social scientists understood the influence of culture in shaping social roles in both Western and primitive societies. "Even the intelligent layman," she added, had witnessed the "success of women in occupations hitherto closed to them [and this] more or less forced the acceptance of this idea."[14] "Modern biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology [had] converge[d] to the point of confirming the basic similarity of the human organism in all races and cultures," a reviewer for the *Saturday Review of Literature* said of the *Samoa* study. "Differences, then, in patterns of behavior, are differences in conditioning through participation in differing cultural situations."[15] Mead's book, nevertheless, "marks an event...Anthropology is turning its attention to *comparative* studies of culture."[16]

Ruth Benedict remarked in her review of *Samoa* that Mead's brilliant case studies of adolescence and gender roles were some of the most intriguing demonstrations of

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[13] Lowie, review of *Coming of Age*, 534.

[14] Hortense Powdermaker, review of *Sex and Temperament*, by Margaret Mead, *Saturday Review of Literature* 12 (June 29, 1935): 16.

[15] Mary Elizabeth Johnson, review of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, by Margaret Mead, *The Saturday Review of Literature* (March 16, 1929): 778.

[16] Italics mine. See Nels Andersen, review of *Coming of Age*, 515.

human nature's adaptability.[17] Mead presented comparative studies, "more convincing than any *a priori* argument as to the plasticity of that which we have been accustomed to theorize about as human nature." Malcolm Cowley declared no less than a victory for social science in this regard in a review of *Sex and Temperament* for *The New Republic*, proclaiming triumphantly that, "[t]he anthropologists are coming home."[18] Cowley saw Mead as the forerunner of a new generation of anthropologists who had spent the previous thirty years traveling the globe and gathering data. They were returning triumphantly with many revelations, both fascinating and disturbing, about the adaptability of humankind. As Cowley quipped,

> This indeed, is the lesson pointed by the studies of almost all the modern anthropologists...They have to report that nothing is humanly impossible, that there is certainly no inferno in which man has not managed somehow to live and probably no Utopia toward which he might not rise.[19]

"This Margaret Mead is a dangerous person," would nevertheless also be the reaction of many readers of *Sex and Temperament*, one reviewer for *The New York Times Book Review* thought. Her books, Florence Finch Kelly observed, were like "a bomb that she drops into the complacent, fundamental conviction of the Occidental world, both scientific and social,"

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[17] Ruth Benedict, review of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, by Margaret Mead, *Journal of Philosophy* 26 (February 14, 1929): 110-11.

[18] Malcolm Cowley, "News From New Guinea," review of *Sex and Temperament*, by Margaret Mead, *The New Republic* 83 (June 5, 1935): 107.

[19] Ibid.

> Her bomb explodes and scatters fragments over all the surrounding area and the first thing she knows some indignant voice will be crying out that this is an outrage and there ought to be a law--.[20]

As Mead hoped, her books became controversial not merely for their challenge to Western concepts of gender or adolescence. Finch and many other readers recognized Mead's "fearlessness" in also confronting scientific and social conventions by using primitive cultures as "social microcosms" in her bid for the reform of American social practices and values.[21] To meet modern challenges Finch recognized,

> Miss Mead would have civilization achieve a richer culture, with many contrasting values, by weaving "a less arbitrary social fabric, in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place" and in which no individual will be forced by artificial distinctions, such as that of sex, "into an all fitting mold."[22]

Ruth Benedict and other readers had detected the implied 'moral' for Americans in the science of comparative anthropology. For Mead, Benedict and others of her cohort, this moral concerned the youth of America, and how Americans might better help the next generation avoid the mistakes of their elders. As one reviewer recalled,

> This is an era of experimentation in American schools, most of the experiments being directed toward greater freedom and less discipline for the growing child. Miss Mead asks the question, and it is one educators might well ponder upon. Where is the adult American, the product of these schools, to learn the discipline and adjustment that life will demand of them?[23]

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[20] Florence Finch Kelly, "A Chilling View of the Sexes: Margaret Mead's Observations Based on Three Primitive Societies Lead Her to Some Iconoclastic Conclusions," *The New York Times Book Review* (May 26, 1935): 2.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

Mead's books were "an attempt to draw certain educational conclusions that might bear on the problem of *rearing* children in our own land."[24] It was clear to Mead that, in a fluid culture, children needed to learn to 'exercise choice,' as she often put it, and participate more fully in community from an early age, as did Samoan girls.[25] The stress and anxiety of assimilation, the *Sturm und Drang* of adolescence so prevalent in Western society but absent in Samoa, for example, might thereby be avoided in the American context. This would redress what Mead and Ruth Benedict saw in American society as a set of conflicting values for the young, "set by the ideals we have made for ourselves [which come to the forefront in] adolescence."[26]

Marketing Primitive and Modern 'Laboratories of Culture' in Postwar America

With these anthropological studies from the 1920s and 30s and the collaborative, interdisciplinary study of national character in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, Mead and her colleagues moved to address patterns of American culture in the postwar era by studying the individual who, Mead argued, "embodie[d], completely, and wholly, the culture, in which he or she [was] reared..."[27] Generalizations about American national character were fruitless, however, if made without comparison to other cultures. Only in the cross-

[24] Nels Anderson, "Youth on a Tropic Isle," review of *Growing Up in New Guinea*, by Margaret Mead, *The Survey* 65 (November 15, 1930): 228. Italics mine.

[25] Many reviewers of Mead's books referred to this emphasis. See Johnson, review of *Coming of Age*, 778; Anderson, "Youth on a Tropical Isle," 228; Krutch, "Men and Women," 634; Powdermaker, review of *Sex and Temperament*, 221.

[26] Benedict, review of *Coming of Age*, 110.

cultural analysis of many laboratories of culture, could Americans "look at themselves, with enough detachment to be able to think," i. e., productively evaluate, their own social reality.[28] In accounts of how comprehensive change in other cultures had released *human adaptive potential*, Mead believed, Americans could learn the patterns of personality that would lead to American social harmony and progress.

One of the most distinctive American traits Mead discovered was an anxiety about broad social transformations in family, work, and society.[29] This was the generation that David Riesman had referred to as the "Lonely Crowd," and that the psychologist Erik Erikson described as existing, as Mead recounted, "between rootedness and departure."[30] Americans, Mead argued, needed to cultivate flexibility if they hoped to survive in a rapidly changing society. In the pages of *Powder* and *Male and Female* was a new ideal of the American character, where "awareness and alertness have taken the place of custom and unconscious docility to the ways of the past."[31] Mead appealed to classic American virtues and past successes while also encouraging a break with old folkways. Americans now faced the same kind of dilemma as European immigrants did in the early twentieth century. A new 'frontier' of culture, and of self, forced them to

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[27] Margaret Mead. From an address to a joint session of The American Psychological Association and The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. 6 September 1976. Container Number E49, Folder 2. Papers of Margaret Mead. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C., 2.

[28] Ibid., 3.

[29] Margaret Mead, "The Impact of Culture on Personality Development on the United States Today." Excerpts from speech at the Mid-century White House Conference on Children and Youth. 6 December 1950. White House Conference on Children and Youth 1949-1963. Container Number E166. Papers of Margaret Mead. Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D. C., 1.

[30] Ibid., 4-5.

[31] Ibid., 2.

choose between the folkways of the Old World and emerging patterns in the new. The path to success, Mead urged, was headlong immersion.

Mead also compared the story of the Western European immigrants to the mythology of the 'pioneer spirit' in the American West.

> This heritage, brought to the United States by those who spoke a foreign language was added to the heritage of the first pioneers who, as they ventured into the new storm ridden, frighteningly vast unsettled country, had also to be ready for anything, expectant of the unexpected. The children of the newer comers have learned from the children of the earlier ones and in turn have taught the children of the earlier ones their hardly learned lessons, how to remain flexible and tentative, ready to settle or ready to move on, ready to look at each new situation as if it were pristine, as on a new Day of Creation.[32]

A willingness to adapt, to create possibility from change, to extract potential from social transformation, Mead said, had seen the pioneers and immigrants through challenging times. Many fellow academicians, however, were dubious of Mead's sweeping analogies and comparisons between different cultures and histories, and her use of the concept of culture laboratories in Samoa and New Guinea to illuminate specific problems in modern social change, in her popular works.

Academic reviews of *Male and Female* favorably acknowledged Mead's revelations about human nature, social mores, and individual identities in primitive cultures. Harvard anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn observed, nevertheless, that there was some "disciplinary in-fighting" about Mead's reputation, especially her career as public intellectual and social commentator.[33] Mead continued to be something of a "controversial figure" in anthropological and intellectual circles. She was criticized again

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[32] Ibid., 4.

[33] Clyde Kluckhohn, "Anthropology Comes of Age," review of *Male and Female*, by Margaret Mead, *The American Scholar* 19, no. 2 (Spring, 1950): 241-56.

for using her research to 'psychoanalyze' Americans in *Male and Female* and *Powder*, and for assertions that went well beyond the scope of her scientific work. Mead, they felt, followed the "shifting intellectual fads" of the day in tailoring her views to fit other characterizations of Americans by well-known social critics such as Riesman and Erikson.[34]

The psychiatrist, Franz Alexander, of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, for example, noted in his review that the prominent chemist and philosopher of science, Wilhelm Ostwald, would have characterized Mead as "an extreme example of the romantic type" of scientist. Mead's penchant for correlation between scientific fact and social, economic, and cultural theory, albeit insightful, nevertheless made for sloppy science.[35] Her unwieldy commentaries were at times cumbersome and disconnected. While praising Mead as a pioneer of interdisciplinary social science, Alexander cautioned that such combinations were bound to have most anthropologists crying foul.[36] Mead's "anecdotal" presentation of evidence in *Male and Female* made her speculations about American families, child development, and the sexes seem lacking in scientific rigor.[37] Her colleagues also chafed at Mead's growing status in the 1950s as the spokesperson for

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[34] Ibid., 250.

[35] Franz Alexander, review of *Male and Female*, by Margaret Mead, *The American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 1 (July, 1951): 82-85. See page 82.

Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932) was a physical chemist who worked in philosophy of science late in his career. His book, *Great Men* (Leipzig: Akademische verlagsgesellschaft, 1909), was the source of Alexander's description. The book examined the psychological underpinnings of scientific endeavors as well as prominent figures in the physical sciences such as Humphry Davy and Michael Faraday.

[36] Kluckhohn, "Anthropology Comes of Age," 250.

[37] S. F. Nadel, review of *Male and Female*, by Margaret Mead, *American Anthropologist* 52 (1950): 419-20.

American anthropology, a scientist who was often "more talked about than read."[38] Not a few of her peers felt that the profession had been misrepresented by her fame and her claims for applied anthropology.

Mead, as Kluckhohn noted, was not the only social scientist who had begun to promote *applied* cultural anthropology as the key to solving social problems. The late 1940s and early 1950s had seen a spate of similarly "messianic" books by anthropologists promising scientific panaceas.[39] Kluckhohn believed, however, that Mead and others had promised too much in the way of social science solutions. His comments on this phenomenon are telling. "Certainly," Kluckhohn wrote of anthropology in the public eye in the 1940s,

> [it was] becoming – rather suddenly – quite fashionable [but] has its dangers to the profession. There are quarters in Washington and even in the business world where anthropology is oversold, where in effect it is regarded as the newer magic, where we are being asked questions which the present generation of anthropologists can never hope to answer.[40]

As the voice of professional restraint, Kluckhohn cautioned against Mead's grandiose pronouncements on the future of modern humanity, the fate of American society, and what a true 'science of culture' could realistically provide.

Many anthropologists had serious reservations about the liberties Mead and her associates were taking with anthropology. Books on applied anthropology such as *Male*

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[38] Kluckhohn, "Anthropology Comes of Age," 250.

[39] Along with Mead's *Male and Female*, Kluckhohn reviewed four other books that made similar claims about the importance of anthropology in consolidating the social sciences and producing a bona fide science of modern culture. See his comments in "Anthropology Comes of Age," in Alfred L. Kroeber, *Anthropology: Race, Language, Culture, Psychology, Prehistory* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948); Melville J. Herscovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948); John Gillin, *The Ways of Men* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1948); George P. Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949).

[40] Kluckhohn, "Anthropology Comes of Age," 241.

and Female might erode professional standards and create public backlash over unmet expectations, as had happened with sociology in the 1930s.[41] Mead's free-form mixture of anthropological insight, social commentary, and political rhetoric in *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (1942), continued throughout her career as a public figure. Academics, intellectuals, and popular critics in turn questioned Mead's attempts to merge objective science with patriotism.

Various intellectual commentators also singled out Mead's American cultural bias in *Powder* and *Male and Female* and branded her a propagandist who was using American national mythology to encourage Americans to embrace change. *Powder* did in fact preach the gospel of American greatness, as John Storck noted in *The New Republic*, highlighting a "Puritan impulse as it has been modified by such things as the frontier, immigration, population mobility ... and industrialism," its people "geared to success, ... shallow personal relationships, ... patterns of aggression needing to be set in motion from the outside."[42] Fascists had used race theory to bolster claims of cultural superiority, especially in the case of Nazi Germany, during the inter-war period. Mead's propaganda about American cultural character, although anti-racist and anti-fascist, also promoted the superiority of American democracy. Not unsurprisingly, this mythologizing struck some reviewers as an oversimplification. "The details of these pictures," as Storck noted, "are not facts but palpably [*sic*?] constructions of the mind."[43] Whether Mead simply used this mythology purposely as a rhetorical device or believed it

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[41] Ibid.

[42] John Storck, "The American Way," review of *And Keep Your Powder Dry*, by Margaret Mead, *The New Republic* 108 (January 4, 1943): 28.

[43] Ibid.

personally, her intellectual critics were dubious of such tactics and dubbed them as examples of her lack of scientific objectivity.

Mead's unwavering defense of American ideals and culture was unmistakable, and it certainly appealed to her contemporary lay readers. It proved to be a valuable tool in promoting her vision of a liberal democratic society aided by a science of culture. Mead's message of America's cultural potential also was conveyed through her descriptions of diversity and malleability in other cultures. Some non-academic readers in the popular press nevertheless also found Mead's cultural comparisons somewhat tenuous. They seemed to be an admixture of social issues and scientific terminology that one *New York Times* reviewer for *Male and Female* described as yet "another exercise in cultural relativism," with "careless scurrying from the haunts of the Papuan head-hunter," for example, "to the schoolhouse of Whittier's poems; the phrases of the Sunday sermon, often dizzying with its repetitiveness; warm, cloudy rhetoric and ecstatic vision."[44]

Mead's characteristically synthetic arguments, even if somewhat circuitous, did not diminish the appeal of her observations about American culture among most of her reviewers. The utility of looking at society as artifice, capable of guided transformation, was not lost on prominent social commentators such as the biologist Julian Huxley who noted that "[Mead's] anthropological studies ha[d] led her beyond all simple theories of economic and social determination to a recognition of the almost unbelievable range of cultural possibilities open to man, each in its own way a creative work of art -- a unitary

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[44] Bernard Mishkin, "The Sexes in Different Cultures," review of *Male and Female*, by Margaret Mead, *The New York Times* (October 16, 1949): 7, 38. See page 38.

presentation of how to be human."[45] While many Americans were looking to psychologists and sociologists for guidance after the Second World War, Huxley observed, Mead was making a strong case for applied anthropology as the central organizing discipline around which all other applied social sciences should coalesce. The study of family and gender dynamics, the education and upbringing of children -- the expansion of potential among these, America's future 'selves' -- all hinged on knowing the *anthropology of social change*. For his part, Huxley praised Mead's vision as the basis for the new "modern humanism" among scientists and intellectuals at the time with its emphasis on expanding human potential in the wake of the global devastation of world war. It was these adjustments in our "human relations," Huxley concluded, that would help cultivate human adaptive potential.

Regardless of the academic and intellectual controversy, *Male and Female* captured a wide readership in the late 1940s and early 50s. It was one of the most talked about books of 1949. The attention in *Male and Female* to the unique social pressures faced by women in ensuring the stability of the home environment and successfully rearing children won considerable praise from her female readers, especially mothers. The *Ladies Home Journal* gave Mead's message to women a clear endorsement in 1949 when extended excerpts were published. Particular emphasis was given to sections of the book that addressed how the loosening of social mores concerning marriage and gender identity pertained to raising children. "Are American boys and girls being educated toward -- or away from -- happier, more successful years as husbands and wives?" asked the publishers. Mead encouraged mothers to consider relaxing traditional expectations

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[45] Julian Huxley, "Human Relations," review of *Male and Female*, by Margaret Mead, *The Spectator* 184 (February 10, 1950): 184.

for boys and girls. Clearly, the words of such a "renowned anthropologist," the editors of the *Journal* expressly indicated, would play well to their readers. As the editor's note at the beginning of the article indicated,

> The JOURNAL publishes this illuminating discussion in the belief that, while some parts may be unusually frank, mothers will find it valuable background knowledge in educating their own children for future happy roles as men, as women -- as husbands, as wives.

In her 1956 follow-up to *Male and Female*, *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation -- Manus, 1928-1953*, Mead showcased the accomplishments of the South Coast Manus tribes on the Admiralties, a group of islands off the coast of New Guinea and part of the Commonwealth of Australia.[46] The Manus, Mead alleged, had managed in one generation to make the transition from a primitive subsistence culture to a Westernized democratic society. As a fellow of the Social Science Research Council, Mead had visited the Admiralties first in 1928-29 with her second husband, the anthropologist Reo Fortune. There they conducted field studies that Mead later incorporated into her books on New Guinea, her studies of cooperation and competition in the 1930s, and her gender studies in *Male and Female* in the 1940s.

When Mead first visited the Manus people in 1928, she encountered a primitive subsistence culture that had seen virtually no significant exposure to modern civilization. During the war years, however, the inhabitants of the Manus were introduced to the technological and material fruits of modern civilization through the American military occupation of the islands. The Americans brought an abundance of goods and machinery, as well as new social customs that together transformed the native culture.

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[46] Margaret Mead, *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation -- Manus, 1928-1953* (New York: William Morris and Company, 1956), xiii.

Admiration for the power of American technology and culture inspired many Manus dwellers to adopt military standards of dress, community organization, and methods of trade and commerce. Intense fascination with technology spawned a quasi-religious "cargo cult" on the island of Rambutjon where it was thought that successful communication with the spirit world would keep the military cargo ships filled with modern goods coming in. By 1946 a political reform movement among the various tribes of the Manus known as the "New Way" took hold, and its leaders successfully modernized their villages and unified rival communities. A program of religious conversion to Christianity also was introduced.

When Mead returned to the Admiralties for a follow-up visit in 1953 she was astounded to find that the Manus had in the seven years after the war seemingly made a full transition to the Western democratic/capitalist cultural model. The Manus had traded their 'old lives for new' in toto. Mead argued in *New Lives for Old* that these isolated examples of cultural transition, these small scale "laboratories" of culture, were indispensable in forging a viable and practical science of social modification. The Manus island chain, Mead argued, was the perfect context in which to study human potential. Mead also recognized in the Manus a general recipe for the kind of character and personality formation that was suited uniquely to a culture in transition.

The Manus had adopted the army camp as a model for community design. Just as American machinery had transformed the landscape of the Manus, to the great satisfaction of its natives, military procedures were used to systematically dismantle old social systems and rebuild them anew. Modern technology and militaristic social

controls were creating new cultural traditions.[47] In the case of the Manus, Mead claimed, the breakdown of older social, moral, religious, and entrepreneurial systems was welcomed by the Manus peoples because, among other things, it created opportunities for women and children to participate more fully in community life. Mead encouraged her reading audience to make comparisons between the cultural experience of women and children in Manus culture, and that of American women and children in the postwar years. By studying the example of the Manus peoples, Mead argued, Americans could learn more about the general character traits that made for a successful transition into a new culture.

> Their delight in mechanical things, their sense of organization, their tendency to treat human beings both humanely and mechanically, their flexible here-and-now approach, their zest and optimism, their concern for children -- all these were elements which would predispose them to appreciate American culture.[48]

The embrace of new technology, a regimented social order, a tolerance for new roles for the sexes, their flexibility, optimism, and concern for the future of their young people -- these were all traits to be encouraged in Americans. The Manus case also demonstrated,

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[47] Ibid., 164-5, 177, 182, 187.

The Manus people themselves described this period of social experimentation in the late 1940s as the "time without taboos" where the prohibitions of traditional social conventions were left aside, and an atmosphere of social experimentation developed among the younger Manus natives. More specifically, their political transition to democratic administrative rule illustrated for Mead the wholesale abandonment of mystic leaders as sources of social authority for new managerial leaders in the communities. Here too, the introduction of Western moral values concerning human equality, brotherly love, and civic responsibility also fostered the breakdown of old social hierarchies and religious superstitions. The sources of evil and illness in Manus culture, for example, were relocated from their old source in the ghost religion to the individual person. The enthusiasm among the Manus, Mead recalls, stemmed in part from the unique combination of factors contributing to their exposure to Western civilization during the war. The example of the Manus, she thought, could serve in other instances as a model for how to manage the process of modernization in other cultural contexts. Later in the 1960s she would draw similarities between American and Manus patterns of youth-centered social experimentation.

[48] Ibid., 212.

Mead argued, that it was more effective to fully eradicate old traditions that had no function in a new social reality than to try and combine the new and old.

> [T]he study of the Manus suggests the great importance of whole patterns, that it is easier to shift from being a South Sea Islander to being a New Yorker – as I have seen Samoans do -- than to shift from being a perfectly adjusted traditional South Sea Islander to a partly civilized, partly acculturated South Sea Islander, who has been given antiquated versions of our philosophy and politics, a few odds and ends of clothing and furniture, and bits and pieces of our economics.[49]

Young Americans should thus be free, Mead thought, to cast off the social mores of their parents in order to adapt fully to emerging social conditions.

"Twenty-five years ago," Mead recalled in the introduction to *New Lives*, "we had learned, just learned, that we could gain much from the disciplined study of primitive people, that here was a priceless laboratory in which we could investigate the possibilities inherent in human nature."[50] The lessons learned from the Manus, Mead suggested to her readers, could help usher in a new era in which social science would be able to exert what she termed "predictive control over the future."[51] This was a bold and calculated claim, one that Mead, as a promoter of liberal-democratic forms of scientific social management, knew her audience would find appealing.

Many historians of science have noted the physical and conceptual depictions of the *laboratory* as especially important venues for constructing the public authority of science.[52] This has been true especially in the human sciences where connotations of

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[49] Ibid., 450.

[50] Mead, *New Lives for Old*, 9.

[51] Ibid., 105.

[52] See for example Bruno Latour and Steven Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986) and Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

mathematical precision and control have been particularly important in facilitating public patronage, professional consolidation, and institutional expansion.[53] This was certainly the case for psychology and anthropology. Mead's and Skinner's emphasis on the *experimental laboratories of culture* in describing social utopia, both in fiction and ethnography, played a key role in matching their scientific authority with the public demand for a science and technology of modern living.

Skinner stressed the 'precision controls' aspect of laboratory experimentation in moving from the manipulation of pigeons to people to whole cultures. In Mead's ethnography and social reform theory, however, the laboratory metaphors were more akin to nineteenth and early twentieth-century biological science. Mead was more in the role of the field naturalist who studied the effects of environmental changes on the evolution and behavior of interconnected communities in the laboratory of nature itself. As a field anthropologist, Mead took advantage of catastrophic changes in Manus island tribal culture in using different lines of 'experimental'/analytical inquiry to study kinship, child rearing, social organization, and tribal government, to get a sense for the behavior of individuals and communities. She did this in the Samoa literature in the 1930s by presenting the analytical variable of adolescence as a venue for making cultural comparisons.

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[53] A good example of this in early twentieth-century psychology is John B. Watson and the popularization of behavioral science. See Kerry Buckley, *Mechanical Man: John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1989). Henrika Kuklick has explored the laboratory metaphor in the history of British anthropology and the interchange of cultural themes in the scientific depictions of native peoples in British colonies. See Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology 1885-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Kuklick, "The Color Blue: From Research in the Torres Straight to an Ecology of Human Behavior," in *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Philip F. Rehbock (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1994), 339-70.

As her colleagues and critics observed, this stretched the limits of cultural anthropology. Mead, the public expert, however, understood the marketing power of presenting primitive cultures as laboratories where the *adaptive patterns of social change* (through analytical variables and individual community members) could be studied. This knowledge would in turn enhance the scientific promise of social engineering when applied to the American context. Both Mead and Skinner used the metaphor of laboratories of culture to construct independent visions of comprehensive social reform in the 1950s. They would later apply the same rhetoric and imagery to ground their reform messages in the real world example of education. Here, the laboratory of the classroom and the school were presented as key to cultivating adaptive human potential, and educating students to live in a culture of change.

Mead had incorporated her theories of culture and human potential, and her calls for an organized science of social change, into her two previous books. In *New Lives for Old* Mead's message of hope was set forth powerfully by her use of anthropology in helping Americans, as Mead's psychologist colleague, Lawrence K. Frank, observed, to understand the reality of change in their own culture.[54] Although her blatant anthropocentrism was considered scientifically suspect by many of her peers, Mead found support for her perspective on the Manus peoples among other prominent social scientists cum public intellectuals. Noted anthropologists such as Clyde Kluckhohn and Ashley Montagu said of *New Lives for Old*, for example, that it effectively illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of the American cultural character in a time when humanity

[54] Lawrence K. Frank, "Growing Up in New Guinea, 1928-1953 -- How a People Decides to Change," review of *New Lives*, by Margaret Mead, *Herald Tribune Book Review* (July 8, 1956): 3. For similar observations see also V. S. Pritchett, "The New World of the Manus," review of *New Lives*, by Margaret Mead, *The New Statesman and Nation* (September 22, 1956): 347-48.

itself seemed to be in crisis.[55] Kluckhohn noted Mead's revision, however, of previous claims about the proper pace of social change. Mead seemed now to argue that rapid social change was better than gradual adjustment. Given the predicament of Americans in the postwar era, transformed in one generation as they were by the Depression and world war, this shift in perspective fit nicely with the task before postwar American.

Yet, as with other utopian social scientific visions of human society, some critics of Mead's theories wondered, as they had with Skinner's *Walden Two*, whether or not social science in any form could serve as what one review of *Powder* called a "culture solvent," a panacea for social problems. Could a science of social change that Mead lobbied for so passionately have the same kind of effect on American society that the military had had on the Manus? Was this simply another science-inspired utopian dream, some reviewers asked?[56]

As historian Fred Matthews observed, those "Deweyite progressives and émigré socialists" that included Mead and her colleagues all "shared the utopian inheritance of the Enlightenment, the belief in the universal kingdom of harmony realized through

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[55] Ashley Montagu, "Return to the Native Drums," review of *New Lives*, by Margaret Mead, *The New York Times* (August 5, 1956): 15; Clyde Kluckhohn, "New Age in New Guinea," review of *New Lives*, by Margaret Mead, *Saturday Review of Literature* 39 (May 12, 1956): 16.

[56] See comments by James G. Leyburn, "Changing Societies," review of *New Lives*, by Margaret Mead, *The Yale Review* 46 (Autumn, 1956): 140-44 and John Storck, "That American Way," review of *Powder*, by Margaret Mead, *The New Republic* 108 (January 4, 1943): 28.

The historian Fred Matthews has argued that utopianism in the rhetoric of the "social engineering elite" in social science was just as strong among liberal democratic scientists such as Mead. It was, in fact, the combination of Mead's Boasian anthropology and the Neo-Freudian psychoanalytic tradition of the 1930s that together laid the foundation for the therapeutic "helping professions" that proliferated after the Second World War. The child psychology of Benjamin Spock and the new science of human relations, for example, evolved out of the behavioral perspective on the self that was rooted in the cultural anthropology of Mead, Benedict, and their cohort of liberal democratic colleagues in the 1930s and 40s. See Fred Matthews, "The Utopia of Human Relations: The Conflict-Free Family in American Social Thought, 1930-1960," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 24 (October, 1988): 343-62.

scientific human engineering."[57] In both Skinner's and Mead's utopias there is as well a shared enthusiasm for the potential of scientific social engineering to remake American culture, one with roots in progressive reform ideology. Moreover, despite contrasting views of the adaptable self in their utopian tales, Skinner's *Walden Two* and Mead's *New Lives for Old* each reflected a desire for the expansion of human potential, and an acknowledgment of the importance of applied social science in this transformation.

In both of these laboratories of humanity (real and imagined), Mead and Skinner were responding in the 1940s and 50s to the same set of popular concerns about the consequences of human aggression, changing social mores and family structures, class diversification, industrial expansion, and child rearing. In addressing these concerns each of them proposed a social plan designed to maximize human potential. Recall, for example, Skinner's professed aims in creating an experimental community such as Walden Two:

1. To build a lifestyle based on *cooperation* rather than *competition.*
2. To maintain it with *non-coercive social sanctions.*
3. To employ new methods of *childcare* and *education.*
4. Create enjoyable work environments.
5. Experiment with all social institutions; *adapt* freely to new conditions; *accept change.*[58]

These were essentially the same reform goals to which Mead aspired in her own utopian vision. Each of their visions invoked the creation of a highly integrated society; both created more opportunities for social innovation and creativity. Both also proposed that exploring the frontiers of human potential should take place under the guidance of social

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[57] Matthews, "The Utopia of Human Relations," 358.

[58] Italics mine. See Chapter Two, "Gaining Control," in the present study and the autobiographical notes of B. F. Skinner, *The Shaping of a Behaviorist: Part Two of an Autobiography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 346.

science. And each of their model societies was intended as an example of how this might take shape in one generation of Americans.

Skinner, the technocrat, envisioned a scientific meritocracy of planners who would implement behavioral modifications to the community directly. Mead, the liberal democrat, however, advocated the re-tooling of contemporary social institutions along democratic lines under the advice and guidance of social science experts. Each laboratory of humanity thus reflected different images of the self -- one mechanistic, the other humanistic. What was the extent and significance of their reception and appropriation by different sectors of American postwar society? How do we account for the exceptional public recognition of Skinner and Mead in the postwar decades given their opposing visions of self and future society? These are questions that I will address in subsequent sections of the present discussion. It will be important, however, first to examine more closely Mead's model for individual human potential in light of her response to the pressing issue of child rearing practices in postwar American culture.

The Individual as Potential: The Cultivation of Human Potentiality

As argued in the previous chapter, the theme of *adaptation* became very important for the social and biological sciences, and for the scientific rhetoric of social change, after the Second World War. It was a predominant theme in both *Walden Two* and Mead's reflections on democratic utopia among the tribes of the Manus islands in *New Lives for Old*. Just as Skinner celebrated the embrace of change and adaptation

among fictitious members of Walden Two, Mead extolled the wisdom of the Manus tribes in dedicating themselves fully to a cooperative transformation of their culture.

The idealization of native traditions in Mead's published studies was nothing new; it stemmed both from her admiration for cultural diversity, and from a rhetorical style that invited direct comparisons between primitives and moderns. Mead had admired the wisdom of Samoan parenting in their gradual introduction of community responsibilities to children from an early age so as to avoid the shock of a quick transition into adulthood. Mead was also clearly impressed with the Manus willingness to bring American democracy and technology together in recasting kinship, child rearing, and government, and creating new social roles for women and children, thus expanding their inherent human potentialities. A new class of wise and semi-educated Manus 'statesman'/organizers came together in councils to negotiate tribal treaties and forge a new government and a new juridical system.

As students of democracy and technology, these 'architects' of the 'New Way' in Manus society were for Mead not unlike the interdisciplinary, committee-oriented social science community in America who were attempting to forge a science of culture in order to recast postwar social institutions. The Manus had learned that social adaptation was a constant process, requiring adjustment at every turn. Mead described American postwar culture the same way.

Americans also were learning to adapt to a rapidly evolving social architecture. Mead noted that the changes in the Manus tribes had made them less combative, more optimistic, and more caring of their children. Mead hoped to adapt the modern self as well to cooperativeness, creativity, and openness to alternatives in all situations. This

view of Americans, inspired by Mead's idealized native peoples, would be reflected in her attitudes about child rearing practices and educational reform in postwar America. As I will show in the present and following sections, the lessons of the primitive society laboratories often had direct application to conceptualizations of American children, their upbringing, and their socialization in the community. Mead's and Skinner's agendas for comprehensive social reforms (as well as those of many in social science) independently coalesced around the issues of child rearing and education.

Mead had found the focus on children and youth among the Manus in the "New Way" movement especially compelling for all its similarity to the American context. How was it, Mead asked, that Manus children were made ready for an unknown future? Why had it been easier for them to make the transition to a different model of adulthood in the New Way?

> [T]here was an even deeper question, and one which is more relevant to what has happened to Manus and what is happening all over the world today [1956]. How was the experience of childhood -- the kind of character which children of one society developed as they grew as compared with the kind of character with children in a different kind of society developed -- related to their capacity to change? Because we had no adequate theory of character formation [in the 1920s], this question reduced itself to the simplicity of asking: Can you change the social system by changing the way in which children are reared?[59]

The new sciences of developmental psychology and psychological anthropology pioneered by Mead and others in her professional cohort such as personality psychologist Gardner Murphy provided at least a partial answer to this important question. Mead and Murphy believed that the home and the classroom were the most important arenas of study in creating new *kinds* of people. Connecting optimal conditions in the domestic

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[59] Mead, *New Lives for Old*, 139.

and community environment to a comprehensive plan for education reform would be the ultimate goal.

From an environmental and social standpoint, Mead's cultural anthropology, Murphy observed, had made the case for human modification quite clear.

> If we ask ourselves what kinds of changes in human nature can come about *very rapidly*, we may point to Margaret Mead's observation of [Manus] people passing from Old Stone Age culture through machine culture to the atomic and space age in one generation, and reply that we should expect two fundamental changes to come in seven-league boots: 1. science-technology; and 2. value systems (in art, religion, words and the feeling for the 'good life').[60]

The malleability of human value systems, cultural traditions, and worldviews, as Mead had demonstrated, was not simply a matter of meeting basic "visceral needs," but an expression of what Murphy described as the uniquely human "craving for thought and understanding" in all stages of individual human development and culture. Driven to make sense of the world, humanity had wielded great influence over its social and biological destiny in the course of modern history.[61] But it now needed a 'science of human potential' that was capable of directing this evolution in the right direction.

Linking her own observations on the formation of individual character to the growing national obsession in the 1940s and 50s with child care, Mead acknowledged that parenting was associated strongly with the success of America. The developmental psychologist, Lois B. Murphy (Gardner Murphy's wife), echoed these sentiments in her

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[60] Murphy, "The Nature of Man," in *Studies in Psychology Presented to Cyril Burt*, ed. Charlotte Banks and P. L. Groadhurst (London: University of London, 1965), 91-108. Reprint from the Menninger Clinic Archives. Papers of Gardner Murphy, Volume 19, Article Number 1388. Menninger Foundation. Topeka, KS., 106.

[61] Murphy, "Where Is The Human Race Going?," in *Science and Human Affairs*, ed. Richard E. Farson (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1965): 7-17. Reprint from the Menninger Clinic Archives. Papers of Gardner Murphy, Volume 19, Article Number 1393. Menninger Foundation. Topeka, KS, 7.

research, noting this shift in attitudes about child care in the postwar era. Citing new literature on the connection between culture patterns and child rearing (including Mead and Martha Wolfenstein's, *Childhood in Contemporary Culture*, 1955),[62] Murphy acknowledged that, "[t]he revolution in child care patterns in the last 15 years testifies to the fluidity of our culture, its capacity for change, and the opportunity both provide for influencing the culture if we can be sure of our ground in doing so."[63] Americans now felt compelled to teach their children "awareness and alertness," and a constant striving for new social possibilities, "[w]alking always new roads, with hardly a map before us."[64] Children needed to be "pioneers" of culture, immigrants to the new society, and to be taught "how to remain flexible and tentative, ready to settle or ready to move on, ready to look at each new situation as if it were pristine, as on a new Day of Creation."[65] And parents were looking increasingly to the "new sciences of child development" in the 1940s and 50s for help.[66]

Popular books such as Benjamin Spock's *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care* (1945) and its neo-Freudian psychoanalytical emphasis on the emotional development of children was also part of this humanist rubric of the American self and its

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[62] *Childhood in Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955). Murphy also mentions two other representative selections. See *Mental Health and Infant Development*, ed. Kenneth Soddy (New York: Basic Books, 1956) and *Emotional Problems of Early Childhood*, ed. Gerald Caplan (New York: Basic Books, 1955).

[63] Lois B. Murphy, "Effects of Child-Rearing Patterns in Mental Health," *Children* 3 (1956): 213-18. See page 213.

[64] Gardner Murphy, "Where Is The Human Race Going?," 8.

[65] Ibid., 12.

[66] Ibid., 8.

development.[67] This framework had roots in the sociology and educational theory of Charles H. Cooley, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, the functional anthropology of Franz Boas, and the Frankfurt school of Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Edward Sapir, and Harry Stack Sullivan who were émigré scientists in America.[68] All of them were colleagues of Mead. Drawing on their work and her own, Mead's reform agenda focused

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[67] Ibid., 347. See Benjamin Spock, *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Pocket Books, 1945).

[68] Fred Matthews, "The Utopia of Human Relations," 347.

For a comparison of education theory among this cohort, see David Lawson, *The Teaching of Values, From Ethical Idealism to Social Psychology: Adler, Dewey, Sullivan, Fromm* (Printed in Canada, 1970). For a comparison of Dewey's approach to child development and that of other prominent theorists, see Carol Garhart Mooney, *Theories of Childhood: An Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget and Vygotsky* (St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2000). For histories of Dewey and education theory and its development, see Katherine C. Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, 1896-1903* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966, c1965); Arthur G. Wirth, *John Dewey As Educator: His Design for Work in Education, 1894-1904* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989). For seminal studies by Dewey see John Dewey, *The School and Society*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980); John Dewey, *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1985); John Dewey, *Philosophy and Education in Their Historic Relations, edited by J. J. Chambliss* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993). For more on the influence of Dewey on American education, see Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1991, c1987). For a historical appraisal of Cooley, see Marshall J. Cohen, *Charles Horton Cooley and the Social Self in American Thought* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982). For background on Franz Boas see pertinent references in chapter one of the present study. For more on Karen Horney, see the compilation of her work in *The Collected Works of Karen Horney* (New York: Norton, 1937-1950). See also Karen Horney, *The Unknown Karen Horney: Essay on Gender, Culture, and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Bernard J. Paris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). For background on Horney, see Susan Quinn, *A Mind of Her Own: The Life of Karen Horney* (New York: Summit Books, 1987); Harold Kelman, *Advances in Psychoanalysis: Contributions to Karen Horney's Holistic Approach* (New York: Norton, 1964). For more on George H. Mead see Alfred Stafford Clayton, *Emergent Mind and Education: A Study of George H. Mead's Bio-Social Behaviorism From an Educational Point of View* (New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1943); David L. Miller, *George Herbert Mead: Self, Language, and the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, c1973); John D. Baldwin, *George Herbert Mead: A Unifying Theory for Sociology* (Newbury Perk, CA: Sage Publications, 1986); Bernard N. Meltzer, *The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead* (Kalamazoo: Center for Sociological Research, Western Michigan University, 1959). For more on Erich Fromm see Gerhard Peter Knapp, *The Art of Living: Erich Fromm's Life and Works* (New York: P. Lang, 1993); Michael McGrath, *Fromm: Ethics and Education* (Lexington, College of Education, University of Kentucky, 1969). For more on Harry Stack Sullivan see Arthur H. Chapman, *Harry Stack Sullivan: His Life and His Work* (New York: Putnam, c1976); Patrick Mullahy, *The Beginnings of Modern American Psychiatry: The Ideas of Harry Stack Sullivan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973, c1970); F. B. Evans, *Harry Stack Sullivan: Interpersonal Theory and Psychotherapy* (New York: Routledge, 1996). For more on Edward Sapir see *Edward Sapir: Appraisals of His Life and Work*, ed. Konrad Koerner (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pubishing Co., 1984); Regna Darnell, *Edward Sapir: Linguist, Anthropologist, Humanist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); *Language, Culture, and Personality: Essays in Memory of Edward Sapir*, ed. Leslie Spier, Irving Hallowell, and Stanley S. Newman (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1960).

on the cultivation of creativity, the skills of social adaptation, personal independence, and cooperation between family members and peers, and in the community.[69] Echoing Dr. Spock, Mead said that what parents needed most was the ability to provide an environment where family relationships remained stable and yet still provided for the development of a strong sense of individuality in the child. Parents needed to be more flexible and let children participate more fully in the worlds of community and society. New social forces, however, made it difficult for parents to serve as guides for their children. Mead highlighted this point in a 1950 White House Conference report on children and youth.

> The impact of the culture in which he lives, which often simultaneously,
>
> a. Reassures and extends opportunities for satisfying relations and, at the same time,
> b. Creates feelings of anxiety and guilt through
>
> 1. The continuing emergence of new social goals and values, often conflicting with each other and with social practices and possibilities
> 2. The development of social and economic trends which alter patterns of family living and make more difficult the achievements of positive.
> 3. The increasing necessity for choice-making in all areas of personal and family living, with ever increasing numbers of variable factors and force.
> 4. The contiguity of cultures in our complex society which are essentially different, equally valid from many points of view, and in competition for the benefits of the American "way of life."[70]

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[69] Fred Matthews, "The Utopia of Human Relations," 347.

[70] Margaret Mead, "Tentative Outline for the Sections on parent Education of the Fact-Finding Report on the 1950 White House Conference on Children and Youth." Unpublished notes. Central Group of Experts In Domestic Affairs. n. d. Container E166, Folder 1. Papers of Margaret Mead. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C., 3-4.

Many of these sentiments in support of the family environment had been articulated on a national level through such federally sponsored projects as the Mid-century White House Conference on Children and Youth which was held in 1950 and populated by leading social scientists and social services professionals. Mead was one of the more prominent and long-standing associates of the conference. Using the combined researches of special project committees and individual social scientists, the work groups in

The upheaval of the war had been a powerful object lesson for social scientists about what peacetime mobilization to a new economy and life-ways would entail for parents and children.[71] As indicated above, the findings of the work groups in the conference aptly reflect professional awareness of the need for emotional support and openness in parenting, where stimulation and exploration on the one hand met careful guidance on the other. This would be necessary in order to produce a well-rounded personality in a world of increasing complexity and change. Further, these reports validated Mead's claim that a child's ability to contribute to the community was crucial for the development of human potential. What also was clear from the White House conference of 1950, however, was that postwar America lacked an infrastructure of developed social and community services.

Mead's cultural anthropology, like her reform agenda for social services and child care, revealed the occasional tendency among cultural anthropologists to discuss both *societies* and *selves* in a *holistic* way. The technique of encapsulating a culture or a nation in the psychology of the individual in culture and personality studies tended to homogenize the anthropologist's view of a culture. In a national context, this could not account for regional and local differences in cultural traditions. Certainly, the rural to urban transition, expanding bureaucracy and technocracy, the mobilization for war, and consumer culture had occasioned a perceived movement toward unity, or at least

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the conference reached the same general conclusion as Mead had independently about the needs of the healthy American family and of youth.

[71] "Findings of the Work Groups." Publication of the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth Mead Papers and Correspondence. 3-7 December 1950. Central Group of Experts in Domestic Affairs. Container E166, Folder 1. Papers of Margaret Mead. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C., 4.

standardization, of American culture in the 1950s. As historians and critics of Mead have often observed, however, she knew far less about American culture and history than she claimed. In the context of adaptations for parents and children, she tended to think, perhaps unrealistically, in terms of comprehensive national transitions. In this sense, Mead was overly optimistic in drawing direct analogies between the holistic self, holistic cultures, and the American national context in arguing for reform. She did however seek a compromise when it came to the issue of education. Like Skinner's, Mead's reform aims emphasized the power of a transformed educational system to gradually remake the whole of society.

Mead and American Education: A Venue for Institutional Reform

A decade later in the White House conference report of 1960, Mead again linked the expansion of human potentiality to democratic social reform. In the 1960s when modern technocracy was challenged openly, Mead was in a better position than in 1950 to lobby for her reform measures. The answer for Mead (and Skinner), amidst a well-publicized education crisis, was to bring social science to bear on methods of education. Any shakeup of institutionalized education would do in the short term. As did Skinner, Mead appealed to business leaders to find new ways to improve the environment of the classroom.

Amidst the public debate over American primary and secondary education in the late 1950s, Mead found audiences in various public and government circles who were very interested in learning how to expand human potential. As an advisor to policy

makers in Washington, Mead framed her ideas for education around the politics of the Cold War. Mead, like Skinner, tied human potentiality to the future of American democracy in characterizing education reform as a question of how to "get ahead of, or at least keep up with, the Russians."[72] Unlike Skinner, however, Mead could not lay claim to any behavioral mechanism or technological procedure for tapping this capacity directly. Much of the research on the environment of children in the home, the classroom, and the community had yet even to be completed.

As traditional models of gender, family, and community changed in the postwar decades, a teaching/learning 'gap' (similar to the concept of a "generation gap," and later a "missile gap") also developed between educators and young Americans demanding training in new skills. "Is not the break between past and present," Mead queried in a 1958 article for the *Harvard Business Review*,

> and the whole problem of outdating in our educational system related to change in the rate of change [itself]? For change has become so rapid that adjustment cannot be left to the next generation; adults must, not once, but continually, take in, adjust to, use, and make innovations in a steady stream of discovery and new conditions.[73]

Mead, like Skinner, argued that a reform plan that merely called for more teachers, more class time, more buildings, and more books was bound to fail. The structure of institutionalized education had to be assessed on its most basic level. This, in turn, would require a completely new approach to the individual, one that incorporated all that had

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[72] Margaret Mead, "The High School of the Future," *California Journal of Secondary Education* 35 (October, 1960): 360-69. See page 361. This article was prepared by Mead for the annual Cubberly Conference on secondary education at Stanford University.

[73] Margaret Mead, "Why Is Education Obsolete?," *Harvard Business Review* 36, no. 6 (November-December, 1958): 23-36, 164-170. See page 24.

been discovered about the *environment-specific* stages of human development. Ironically, Skinner would have agreed with Mead's assessment.

Mead's cultural anthropology had demonstrated, she claimed, that life skills had to be taught and entrusted to the young from an early age. She invoked the progressive education initiatives that she and her colleagues had helped forge in the 1930s that stressed the "emotional, intellectual, and physical development" of children, a perspective informed by comparative ethnography and psychology.[74] Rather than commandeer education with a cadre of professional managers and technologies, Mead envisioned an educational "protocracy" of professionals in interdisciplinary social science who would put their knowledge of humanity at the schoolteacher's disposal in a cooperative, advisory capacity.[75] American education would also have to change its structure from a rigid "ladder" of age-based grade scales and standardized proficiency ratings, to a flexible and evolving "lattice," a lateral matrix of learning opportunities, where the free exchange of new, culturally relevant knowledge would cut across age, gender, and class lines.[76] An alternative system, she proposed, might follow the stages of growth from developmental psychology and cultural anthropology.

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[74] Margaret Mead, "Toward an Educational Protocracy," *New York University Education Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1975): 2-7. See page 2. Mead mentions the Hanover Seminar on Human Relations in 1934, out of which the theory of national character developed, as particularly important. Among her colleagues were John Dewey, Lawrence K. Frank, and Caroline Zachry, all of whom were members of the Progressive Education Association dedicated to social scientific research into learning.

[75] Ibid. See similar remarks about the need for anthropologists and psychologists to interact with educators more closely in Mead's article "The Contemporary Challenge to Education," in the set of collected essays edited by W. R. Niblett, *Education --The Lost Dimension* (New York: William Sloan Associates, 1955), 105-12. See also Mead's Foreword to this volume, pages vii-x, as well as her summary of the essays, pages 271-78.

[76] Mead, "High School of the Future," 361.

The first "phase" of education might emphasize the facilitation of interpersonal bonds with one teacher or parent figure. The next phase might then concentrate on group bonding among older children. This group-learning stage could be scientifically studied to find those behavioral techniques that streamlined the educational process, a notion somewhat akin to Skinner's idea of teaching efficiency.[77] In analyzing the physical and emotional maturity of students, subsequent learning phases would accommodate both students who needed special attention in participating in the community, and also those students who were ready for full participation.

Mead envisioned this developmental approach to learning stages with the idea of moving institutional education away from the 'homogenization' of students. In her model of education planning, the teacher would work closely with a resident social scientist in interpreting information about students in each community (e. g., demographics, immigrant and minority status, gender, economic status). This knowledge could then be applied to curriculum design. This strategy is reminiscent of the British social services model that she praised highly in the early 1950s. The "school of the future" Mead felt, should be thought of more as a "community center where all adolescents are given a focus and some sort of protection, " and where the transition from home to community life could be facilitated more effectively.[78]

"No one," Mead stressed in an article written for the *National Education Association Journal* in 1959, "will live all his life in the world into which he was born, and no one will die in the world in which he worked in his maturity." The school

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[77] Ibid. 362-66.

[78] Ibid., 367, 368.

curriculum had to incorporate regular re-tooling in helping student fulfill a "rapid and self-conscious adaptation to a changing world," bringing in new knowledge and skills at a rate that kept pace with the surrounding culture.[79] Since new skills would be in constant demand in an evolving culture, education centers would also have to accommodate people of all ages returning occasionally for re-training. Public education would also have to accommodate students with different aptitudes and styles of learning.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, children were at the heart of Mead's popular and professional writing in the 1940s and 50s. The core themes of these articles and lectures can be summarized in the following set of prescriptive statements:

1. Children must be taught to live in a culture of constant change, to adjust as they go.
2. Imagination and creativity must be engaged at all stages of development with diverse and stimulating experiences that expose children to multiple social environments, cultural traditions, and living contexts.
3. Children must be challenged and pushed to excel with non-coercive methods of education and parenting in order to function independently.
4. Children must not be sheltered from the world of adults and the responsibilities of living in the community outside their home environment.
5. Children must learn to thrive in an increasingly mechanized world of new technologies such that they harness the powers of adaptation to their global environment.[80]

Herein is Mead's well-worn message that the self must be patterned for adaptation through immersion in an international environment of change. Skinner, of course, presented similar themes for education and child rearing during the 1960s.

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[79] Margaret Mead, "A Redefinition of Education," *Journal of the National Education Association* 48 (October, 1959): 15-17. See page 16.

[80] Taken from an article by Mead in a 1957 special edition of *Parent's Magazine* devoted to "Preparing Today's Children for Tomorrow's World." See Margaret Mead's article in this document entitled "Raising Children Who'll Reach for the Moon," *Parent's Magazine* 33, no. 10 (October, 1957): 44-46.

A postwar obsession with emotional well being in the helping professions (represented in Dr. Spock and progressive education theory), Mead cautioned, would prevent sufficient experience with new worlds.[81] Parental fear of emotional trauma could keep children from transcending conventions and perceived limitations. As Mead had observed in her 1955 research survey, *Childhood in Contemporary Cultures*,

> The comparative study of cultures has played a significant role in introducing this sort of balance into our enthusiastic attempts to revise our methods of child care.[82] ... Only gradually have we come to recognize the complexity of such applications of insight to changed social procedures, the extent to which the whole culture and the whole society must be taken into account, the limitations on innovation given by the extent to which the innovating adults are genuine members of their own culture, able to reinterpret and reorganize the more drastic recommendations. We have slowly come to realize also that insights which are based on trauma, failure, casualties of all sorts are at best only half the story; that we can make no complete plans [for child rearing] without a second set of insights based on blessing, gift, success, upon a study of those happy combinations which produce something more than mere "adjustment"; and that from experience the growing child gains not only wounds and vulnerabilities by also extra strengths and blessings.[83]

Mead sounded this same admonition throughout the 1950s and 60s in articles and lectures aimed at parents and educators. She argued that, as in many cultures around the world, children should start transitioning into the adult world much earlier in life. One of the drawbacks of a secluded home environment and educational system, Mead asserted,

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[81] Margaret Mead, "Different Cultural Patterns and Technological Change," in *Mental Health and Infant Development: Proceedings of the International Seminar held by the World Federation for Mental Health* at Chichester, England, 2 vols., ed. Kenneth Soddy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), 161-185.

[82] Mead and Wolfenstein, *Childhood in Contemporary Cultures*, 452.

[83] Ibid., 451.

was that American children did not get enough exposure early on to community life and to the stimulation of multiple learning environments.[84]

Of utmost importance in re-designing American education in order to compete with the Russians, Mead argued, was the willingness to break free of past traditions by taking an *experimental* approach to school design. As with Skinner, Mead argued that it would be the "fear of experimentation, our unwillingness to carry experimentation *far enough*, our fixation on the kind of competition that in the end [would be] certain to give one the defects if not the virtues of one's competitor -- as we become made more and more in our rival's image," that would be the downfall of American education.[85]

Among the most striking aspects of Mead's appeals for education reform was her opinion about where the source of innovation and change might be found. Ironically, she appealed not to the government or the schools themselves, but to the very same corporate sector that Skinner had courted in promoting his teaching technologies. "Industry," she said, "has the peculiar advantage of understanding the major evil from which our whole educational system is suffering -- *obsolescence*." Industrialists, as Mead pointed out in a speech to business leaders, had made the study of obsolescence and innovation an essential tool of their trade. What better resource, Mead thought, than the business community for insight on how to increase the effectiveness of schools. As she observed,

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[84] Margaret Mead, "Children in American Culture," *National Elementary Principal* 36, no. 6 (April, 1957): 16-19. See also her comments on similar changes to maternity practices in "Families and Maternity Care Around the World," *Bulletin of the American College of Nurse-Midwifery* 8, no. 1 (Spring, 1963): 2-7, and to mental health professionals such as in her 1957 presidential address, "Growing Up in Different Cultures," to the World Federation for Mental Health. See this speech in *Growing Up in a Changing World: Papers Presented at the Tenth Annual Meeting of the World Federation for Mental Health*, Copenhagen, Denmark, August, 1957 (London: World Federation for Mental Health, 1958), 7-14.

[85] Mead, "High School of the Future," 369. The italics are Mead's. See similar comments in Mead's article "Questions That Need Asking," *Teachers College Record* 63, no. 2 (November, 1961): 89-93.

> Industry has already taken the lead -- within its own walls -- in developing a new type of education that includes all levels of competence and training and that freely faces the need for education at the senior levels of management.[86]

In their individual quests for a better scientific understanding of the self, both Skinner and Mead drew special inspiration from the idea of using the *experimental laboratories* of *culture,* symbolized in Skinner's baby tender and his imagined utopian society of *Walden Two* and in Mead's study of the Manus tribes in the midst of social transition. Skinner and Mead both supported the notion that a science of education was a real possibility. They believed that institutional education, as well as human natures themselves, could be modified to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving society. The *efficiency* and *productive capacity* of educational institutions, Skinner and Mead asserted, could not be addressed apart from this pressing need for a new approach to human nature. The key to social progress, Skinner and Mead would have agreed, was the preservation of the *adaptive*, *experimental* perspective on the classroom and the school.

"The Mead and Her Message": Mead's Audiences in the Age of Aquarius[87]

The 1960s proved to be the most important decade for Mead in promoting her vision of the self and her social reform agenda. The political and social volatility of these years fueled popular debate about civil rights, the Vietnam War, poverty, pollution, feminism, the fate of the family, and the counterculture movement. Indeed, both Mead

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[86] Margaret Mead, "Why Is Education Obsolete?," 23.

[87] The phrase in quotations is taken from the title of a 1970 article about Mead and her career as a public intellectual. See the reference to this article below.

and her growing audience saw that cultural anthropology and the gospel of expanded human potential were tailor-made for the reassessment of American society that had begun in the late 1950s. Mead's growing celebrity, the "Mead phenomenon," as it came to be known in the popular press, marked her international reputation as an expert on human nature, an anthropologist who successfully brought the comparative study of cultures into the public domain.

As many commentators noted of her steady rise to fame in the 1950s and 60s, the phenomenon of Mead, as icon and solicitor of applied anthropology, was linked firmly to intense public anxiety over living in an "accelerated" culture. As one commentator observed in a 1970 retrospective of Mead's career for the *New York Times*, drastic social changes on all fronts in the years after the Second World War "ha[d] produced a whole new ballgame for the human race."

> People are understandably anxious about a game in which the rules have been suddenly and drastically revised; and since anthropology is essentially a study of cultural adaptation, Mead the anthropologist has become a social umpire, calling the plays as they happen. At the same time, Mead the popularizer is an effective commentator (or "color announcer") who gives her audiences access to the new, esoteric rules in a language they can understand.[88]

As Skinner had done in his own promotional campaigns of the 1960s, Mead tapped into emerging constituencies that enthusiastically appropriated her vision of the self and helped bring it to the public eye. This phenomenon established Mead as a well-known social commentator among a group of high-profile public intellectuals who debated the

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[88] David Dempsey, "The Mead and Her Message," 75.

This was perhaps the best and most representative retrospective of Mead's career in the press at the time. It contains an in-depth analysis of Mead's rise to public prominence in the 1950s and 60s and does an excellent job of surveying her place among social commentators of this period. It also includes several discussions of Mead's image as public scientist as characterized by fellow academics, politicians, and the general public.

fate of humanity in the media during the 1960s. Among counterculture activists, feminists, civil rights organizers, politicians, educators, and parents, Mead found audiences who embraced her as an authority figure. Anti-establishment activists who employed concepts of cultural diversity as tools of protest also accepted Mead as a sage. She was a science 'expert' attuned to the political movements of the day, a guide to the American experience who was more personable and accessible to the average American than other public intellectuals.

Mead worked tirelessly during these years to solidify this public image. Mead attempted, as always, in her characteristically steady stream of articles, lectures, discussions, and books, to relate her theories of social change and humanity to a myriad of contemporary issues and problems. Like Skinner, Mead marketed her social theories in the popular press as panaceas. World hunger and overpopulation, environmental devastation, failed education, warfare, racial tension, feminism, recreational drug use, child development, community planning, urban poverty and violence -- these were among the many issues that Mead addressed as the so-called "social umpire" and "color announcer" of American life in the 1960s. "Mead," the *Times* writer observed, "is simply an anthropologist with a mission, which the new rules of the game have made more urgent than ever."[89]

Indeed, Mead's efforts to raise public awareness about the social utility of cultural anthropology helped to redefine its popular image by this time as an *applied science*, a "study of *cultural adaptation*,"[90] rather than simply a survey of primitive cultures. This

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid. Italics mine.

development, I argue, can be interpreted historically as one among many indications of the popular appropriation of Mead as an icon of anthropology in the 1960s and 70s. Her place in public debates about the future of humanity, the social relevance of anthropology, and the popular appropriation of scientific images of the self in the postwar decades was solidified during this time.

The upsurge of highly vocal and aggressive challenges to American society by feminists, environmentalists, civil-rights activists, and the youth counterculture in the 1960s saw a more thoroughgoing evaluation and appropriation of Mead's perspectives on the self. These political constituencies -- women, minorities, and the young -- that were involved in social protest and rebellion, had a vested interest in the political implications of theories of human potentiality and a personal quest for the self. Further, because Mead brought with her the legacy of progressivism and the rhetoric of liberal democracy, these groups found some (but not all) of her perspectives on humanity particularly amenable to their protest movements. As one commentator observed, "Mead's partisans [could] trace her professional lineage to such scholar-activists as Jane Addams, who used her learning to revolutionize social work in this country."[91] So, similarly, had Mead used her anthropology of social reform in the 1960s. To a much greater degree than Skinner, Mead was appropriated as a leader in the counterculture movement. Her holistic and humanistic vision of the self was part and parcel of their cause.

Mead did not, however, accept all of the protest politics of these groups, nor did they themselves always agree with her depictions of the self. Without question, Mead had been a lifelong supporter of civil-rights and women's liberation. But she avoided

[91] Ibid.

allying herself closely with any political camp. Mead often presented her opinions with more professional detachment, invoking her authoritative status as a social science expert, in advocating the *universal* challenge for all Americans, -- to liberate themselves from the individual *psychology* and broad *cultural* conventions that perpetuated *human limitation*. The political and reform aims of each of these groups, she would argue, could be boiled down to this basic task.

Mead's opinions on social reform in this respect serve as a productive analytical backdrop for the historical appraisal of the reciprocal exchange dynamic between Mead and her newfound audiences. This dynamic can be explored using appraisals by representatives of these audiences and the mass media coverage that Mead received in the 1960s and 70s. The aim in the present discussion is to juxtapose the unique and sometimes contradictory ways in which Mead chose to address feminism, the civil rights movement, and the counterculture. Their interpretations of Mead's vision for the self illustrate the complex manner in which it was critiqued and transformed.

With respect to the feminist critique of Mead's ethnologies and their impact on the politics of gender in postwar America, it is important to recall the observations of the cultural historian Micaela di Leonardo. As mentioned in the previous chapter, di Leonardo has highlighted the importance of examining Mead historically, not only as an authoritative expert on cultural anthropology, but also as an adept publicist, a scientist keenly aware of conventional sensibilities and the political power structure of the academic and governmental circles that she cultivated.[92] Mead's own experience of postwar American culture unquestionably shaped her presentation of primitive culture for

[92] Micaela di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

"commodification" and public consumption. The scientific treatment of race and gender, in particular, di Leonardo noted, proved to be very important marketing vehicles for anthropologists such as Mead in the postwar decades.[93]

In books such as *Powder* and *Male and Female*, Mead, the patriot, left little doubt as to her support of traditional American values. Indeed, some such as di Leonardo have claimed that Mead was not an anti-modern cultural relativist, but an imperialist who touted the superiority of Western society.[94] This interpretation notwithstanding, Mead did market her anthropology of gender in the 1940s and 50s not only as a forum for discussing human malleability but also simultaneously as a means of scientifically reifying some aspects of traditional Western concepts of male and female potentiality. Fellow social scientists criticized Mead for having reconstituted her research in order to maximize the mass-appeal of her publications. Other critics saw Mead's work as blatantly anti-feminist and highly detrimental to the women's movement of the late 1950s. Betty Friedan's lambasting of Mead serves to illustrate, as di Leonardo has observed, the politics of power relationships embedded in postwar American social science, and in Mead's anthropological pronouncements on women in postwar American culture.

Di Leonardo's study is a valuable treatment of the political economy of American anthropology and its negotiation by prominent anthropologists. Her accusations as to Mead's alleged imperialism, ethnic elitism, and failure to engage American cultural hegemony, however, are misleading and historically misplaced. As several historians

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[93] Ibid., 169, 198.

[94] Ibid., 340.

have observed, di Leonardo's is a Marxist/feminist interpretation of the history of American ethnography and anthropology; she has judged their successes and failures on the basis of late twentieth-century feminist thought. As a postmodern history of feminist theory di Leonardo's argument is questionable. As history, it is simply presentist and Whiggish. She is not the first scholar to point out the political and cultural subtexts of American anthropological research, nor its "commodification" in popular culture.[95] Mead's published work does indeed reflect cultural and political preferences, and a concerted effort to accommodate a predominantly white middle class popular readership. Historical appraisals of social scientists such as Mead, Spock, Parsons, and Skinner and their negotiation of American politics and culture, however, are best kept within the parameters of the society and time in which they lived. The politics of present day feminism should not be used as criteria for writing the history of Mead, or Friedan for that matter, as public intellectuals.

As I have argued, Mead carefully balanced her message of reform against the political and social perspectives of her professional and lay audiences in popularizing her scientific wares. Like most social scientists, Mead valued the inroads that social scientists had made into American government in the postwar years. She strategically negotiated the many and changing borders of American culture and politics with the goal of preserving a place for herself in the power structure that was vital to her public career. This was no less true of Betty Friedan and her career as a leading feminist author in the

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[95] Consult the reviews of di Leonardo's book by Steven Hoelscher, "America the Exotic," an essay review of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and Micaela di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) for *The American Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2000): 168-78. See also the review of *Exotics at Home* by Julia E. Liss in *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (2000): 1834.

1950s and 60s. As Daniel Horowitz has observed recently, Friedan's navigation through Cold War politics and McCarthyism required her to conceal her "radical" past as a student activist, labor journalist, and Popular Front feminist in the 1930s. Cultivating a popular audience required Friedan to reinvent her image in the 1950s as an upper middle class housewife writing about the struggles of women in liberating themselves from the domestic sphere.[96] Friedan's negotiation of Cold War politics in creating a forum for feminism must be considered when examining her contemporary critique of Mead's anthropology.

In her book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Friedan targeted professional social science in general, and Mead in particular, for a full chapter's worth of criticism for scientifically legitimating traditional stereotypes about women and perpetuating their confinement to the domestic sphere.[97] The image of the female in Western society, the "feminine mystique," as Friedan termed it, entailed a distinct female nature, "mysterious and intuitive and close to the creation of and origin of life that man-made science may never be able to understand."[98] Women, by this definition, possessed distinctive character traits that were bound uniquely to the biology of reproduction. "The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity."[99] Any aspirations beyond the domain of home and

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[96] See reviews of Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998) by Annelise Orleck for *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 2 (1999): 574-75 and by Nancy Gabin for *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 1389.

[97] See the chapter entitled "The Functional Freeze, The Feminine Protest, and Margaret Mead," in Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963).

[98] Ibid., 43.

[99] Ibid.

family, while encouraged on the one hand by Mead, also held the risk of destroying fundamental female nature. Modern American society and its embrace of this mystique, Friedan argued, left women with only one straightforward goal for their lives -- "Occupation: housewife."[100]

For an institution that held such promise in liberating women from traditional social roles, Friedan felt that American social science in the postwar years had betrayed its most fundamental principles. Many in the 'helping' sciences, Friedan claimed, catered to the public demand for social adjustment in their research but avoided what she felt was their professional responsibility to battle against gender prejudice through objective scientific inquiry. In exploiting a growing market for expert advice on child rearing and family education, professionals invoked traditional conventions about family structure, and the bifurcation of the gendered self, in plying their therapeutic wares.[101] This professional trend had its methodological roots, Friedan argued, in a combination of Freudian conceptualizations of the 'psychological self,' defined by fundamental instinctive drives (such as sex), with functionalist interpretations of culture in sociology and anthropology. Anthropological functionalism, or the study of the roles that individuals and groups play in a culture, was designed as an analog to the biological study of organisms in nature. It was meant to bolster the scientific credibility of the social sciences. When applied to the study of the American family, however, functionalism, far from liberating women, Friedan argued, had been used to justify the separate spheres of men and women.

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., 135.

The feminine mystique, Friedan claimed, was well represented among leading social scientists whose work enjoyed a wide popular readership. Friedan pointed to sociologists Talcott Parsons and Mirra Komarovsky, as well as Mead, as examples. In Parsons' famous studies of the American family, for example, he had openly endorsed conceptualizations of female nature that tied women biologically and culturally to the domestic realm. Acknowledging that women in the 1950s had the opportunity to break into male-dominated professions, Parsons nevertheless argued that the resulting stress on women, and the damage that it would do to the family, made liberation inadvisable.[102] Sexual segregation, Parsons argued, preserved the integrity of the family; there was no room in contemporary postwar culture just yet for complete equality of opportunity for the sexes.[103]

The noted sociologist Mirra Komarovsky appeared to offer much the same assessment in her text, *Women in the Modern World, Their Education and Their Dilemmas* (1953).[104] In this and many other educational texts on family planning that were geared toward women, professionals such as Komarovski and Parsons assented to traditional roles for women by using functionalist explanations. The structure of contemporary American culture, they claimed, did not really offer women any of the viable alternatives suggested by anthropological and sociological studies on women in

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[102] Friedan refers to statements made by Parsons in two articles that also reflect opinions in his well-known popular texts. See her references to Talcott Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States," and "An Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification," in *Essays in Sociological Theory, Pure and Applied* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949), 89-103. See pages 69-88. See also *Family Socialization and Interaction Process*, ed. Talcott Parsons, Robert F. Bales, James Olds (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1954).

[103] Friedan, *Mystique*, 133.

[104] Mirra Komarovsky, *Women in the Modern World, Their Education and Their Dilemmas* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953).

various cultures. This, Friedan said, was the real travesty of modern social science. Social scientists, in her opinion, had manipulated social science purposely, hoping to cash in on their newfound social authority (and book sales) in the postwar years. Instead of "probing for deeper truth," as Friedan had hoped, scientists had used functionalism to market family planning in a way that supported the status quo for women.[105]

As "the most powerful influence on modern women, in terms both of functionalism and the feminist protest," and the "symbol of the woman thinker in America," Margaret Mead, according to Friedan, was one of the biggest threats to women's liberation. In Friedan's estimation, Mead and her message had by the late 1950s become ubiquitous in American culture. "Margaret Mead," Friedan declared, was "her own best popularizer -- and her influence has been felt in almost every layer of American thought."[106] Mead's theories of culture and personality had been disseminated in countless popular press articles and books, and taught to women across the nation in college courses on "anthropology, sociology, psychology, education, marriage and family life." This had influenced profoundly the self-image of a whole generation of women. Mead's theories of gender and personality also were learned by a generation of science professionals in teaching, medicine, and psychiatry.

Mead's opinions on female potential often seemed mixed and paradoxical. On the one hand, Mead, the self-made feminist and woman anthropologist, had popularized

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[105] Friedan, *Mystique*, 134-35. Friedan noted that this was part of the reason why functionalism was rejected as a concept in the social sciences later on in the 1950s. It assumed a fixed culture that was not subject to transformation or change. See her reference to Kingsley Davis, "The Myth of Functional Analysis as a Special Method in Sociology and Anthropology," *American Sociological Review* 24, no. 6 (December, 1959): 757-72.

[106] Friedan, *Mystique*, 135-36.

in the 1930s the "revolutionary" idea that gender typologies varied widely among different cultures, and that human nature was flexible. But in *Male and Female* and other publications in the 1950s, the era of both social containment and re-adjustment, this message was mixed in with what seemed to be an endorsement of American gender hierarchy. Oddly, it appeared that Mead used the biological determinism embedded in Freudian conceptualizations of the self and the cultural anthropology of the "primitive" in subscribing, at least tacitly, to standard American roles for men and women. Why, Friedan wondered, had Mead muddied her message in *Male and Female*, a book that, as Friedan lamented, had become a "cornerstone of the feminine mystique."[107]

Mead had extrapolated an ideal of female nature from primitive culture and universalized it, arguing that biologically defined roles were not merely cultural conventions but facts of female nature.[108] This appeared to turn Mead's entire thesis on its head. Mead and other experts seemed to assert that the very fabric of American society in the 1950s depended on women not breaking with their time-honored roles, at least not too much. Quoting from *Male and Female*, Friedan pointed to one example of this confusing message. Mead had said,

> It is of very doubtful value to enlist the gifts of women if bringing women into fields that have been defined as male frightens the men, unsexes the women, muffles and distorts the contributions the women could make, either because their presence excludes men from the occupation or because it changes the quality of the men who enter it ... It is folly to ignore the signs which warn us that the present terms in which women are lured by their own curiosities and drives developed under the same educational system as boys ... are bad for both men and women.[109]

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[107] Ibid., 138.

[108] Ibid., 141.

[109] This is the passage from Mead's *Male and Female* that was used by Friedan to make this particular point. See Friedan, *Mystique*, 145 for her use of this quote as well as the original quote from Mead in *Male and Female* (New York: W. Morrow, 1955), 16-18, as cited by Friedan, page 384.

In a culture where social science had been given authority in "ordering" American life, why, Friedan asked, were social scientists such as Mead not championing change on one of the most obvious fronts, as they had in the 1930s? Why had Mead seemingly gone back on all that her personal life stood for and betrayed the many women who emulated her example?[110] Why did Mead change her opinion yet again in the 1960s in criticizing women for not reaching beyond the domestic sphere enough and getting more involved with a world in crisis?[111]

Despite this attack most Americans saw Mead as a leader in the feminist movement. Undoubtedly, Mead designed her gender characterizations in the 1950s so as not to alienate herself from the public. She couched her messages of human potentiality in terms that were amenable to predominant conventions about gender roles. In the 1960s, however, Mead was free to argue female liberation in a time when social mores regarding marriage, family and community structure, and gender roles were being challenged openly on many political fronts.[112] Still, Mead continued to have little patience for feminist politics that engaged in unproductive, petty contentiousness and anti-male sentiment.[113] She would not jeopardize her place in 'establishment'

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[110] Friedan, *Mystique*, 146.

[111] Friedan refers here to an excerpt in the *Saturday Evening Post* (March 3, 1962) from an introduction by Margaret Mead in Beverly Benner Cassara, et al., *American Women: The Changing Image* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962) where Mead makes these statements. See pages ix-xv, and the quote on page xii.

[112] This is not to say that such challenges had not gotten underway by the 1950s. Revisionist scholarship on the history of 1950s American women's movements, as mentioned in chapter one of the present study, cites many examples of organized opposition to gender discrimination and the pursuit of labor and employment rights by women in the workplace.

[113] See the interview of Mead by Eleanor Blau, "Dr. Mead, Lifelong Feminist, Says 'Nonsense' of many in Women's Lib 'Gets Us Nowhere,'" *The New York Times* (April 25, 1971): 55. See also an article by Sheila

communities that she knew were vital in creating substantive reform. In this she represented the sentiments of many in the social sciences who had benefited from postwar sponsorship by government agencies. Politically, she had to play to multiple and opposing communities while also preserving an air of expert detachment.

This also seemed evident in Mead's impatience with some of the politics of self in the civil rights movement. Her famous televised dialogues with the novelist and poet, James Baldwin, were collected for publication in the book entitled *A Rap on Race* (1971). Their dialogue was billed as the "most important racial confrontation of our time," between the most prominent civil rights intellectual and the foremost anthropologist of the day.[114] Together Mead and Baldwin appeared on the *Dick Cavett Show*, the *Michael Douglas Show*, and the *Today Show* for these exchanges.[115]

Baldwin had spent his career writing novels, plays, and poetry that personalized the plight of African Americans living in a segregated America. Baldwin believed that Americans still had much to atone for in a racist society. In their discussions, Mead declared that realistic solutions to racial problems should be sought instead. Mead refused to accept Baldwin's confrontational agenda for the civil rights movement. She also rejected the idea of giving special consideration to one group discriminated against over another. Her opinions created an unexpected twist in their debates. As Mead repeated in their exchanges,

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K. Johnson, "A Woman Anthropologist Offers a Solution to the Woman Problem," *The New York Times* (August 27, 1972): SM7.

[114] James Baldwin and Margaret Mead, *A Rap on Race* (London: Michael Joseph, 1971). See Anatole Broyard, "Poet and the Anthropologist," review of *A Rap on Race*, by Margaret Mead, *The New York Times* (May 21, 1971), 37. Quote taken from an advertisement for this book that was collected for the Margaret Mead papers at Columbia University Archives. Columbia University. New York City, NY.

[115] James Baldwin and Margaret Mead, *A Rap on Race* (London: Michael Joseph, 1971).

> What I feel is this. We agree that we are both Americans. We agree in the sense of responsibility for the present and the future. You have approached this present moment by one route and I have approached it by another. In the colors of our skin you represent a course of victimization and suffering and exploitation and everything in the world. If you just use skin color, I represent the group that was in the ascendance, were the conquerors, had the power, owned the land -- you can say anything you like. All right. Now here we both are ... Now is it necessary for you to narrow history down and express only despair or bitterness while I express hope? Is this intrinsic to our position at the moment? ... [C]an we both, nevertheless, stand shoulder to shoulder, a continent or an ocean away, working for the same future? I think this is the real problem.[116]

Mead's responses to Baldwin were consistent with her desire not to let radical politics seep into her proclamations about the self. They also may reflect an air of cultural superiority that di Leonardo and others have noted in Mead's writing. Perhaps because of this, many modern critics claim to detect a latent racial and cultural prejudice in Mead's research and opinions.[117]

Mead's distaste for radical activism spanned her entire career. Mead biographers Hilary Lapsley and Lois Banner note not only her desire to accommodate politically conservative audiences in government and the public but also the role that family history

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[116] Ibid., 233-34.

[117] Aside from di Leonardo's observations on this subject, these alleged cultural and racial biases have also been explored by Louise M. Newman in her essay, "Coming of Age, But Not In Samoa: Reflections on Margaret Mead's Legacy for Western Liberal Feminism," *American Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1996): 233-72 and Subhadra Mitra Channa, "Gender, Feminism, and Margaret Mead: Her Study Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies," *The Eastern Anthropologist* 56, no. 1 (2003): 11-29. Di Leonardo and Neumann argue that Mead's was an ethnocentric and imperialist anthropology that catered to the sensibilities of the white middle class. Others have claimed that Mead's descriptions of native peoples in Samoa, New Guinea, and elsewhere did, at times, employ conventional stereotypes about non-white people. See Jean Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001) and the collected essays edited by Leonora Foerstel and Angela Gilliam, *Confronting the Margaret Mead Legacy: Scholarship, Empire and the South Pacific* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), especially Foerstel's essay, "Margaret Mead From a Cultural Historical Perspective," 55-74. For a rebuttal to these interpretations see the recent scholarship by Lois W. Banner, *Intertwined Lives: Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Their Circle* (New York: Knopf, Distributed by Random House, 2003), 394-99.

played in shaping her message of science-based social reform.[118] Emily Fogg Mead had been a politically active suffragist and protest organizer in the 1910s. Margaret Mead, however, concluded that her mother's progressive political activism had been ineffective. Substantive reforms should be based in scientific research rather that the politics of social protest.[119] Career women of Mead's generation in the 1920s and 30s, as Rosalind Rosenberg has observed, also felt strongly that professional advancement and the "accommodation" of women in male-dominated fields would prove more valuable to the cause of liberating women.[120] This also could explain various instances where Mead avoided requests by feminists and civil rights activists for endorsement.[121]

There is little question, however, as to Mead's scientific and professional dedication to the advancement of women and the cause of civil rights. Mead actively supported civil rights legislation in the 1950s and wrote often about the scourge of racism. And despite her seemingly contradictory opinions about female potentiality in books such as *Male and Female*, as well as her long-running column in *Redbook* magazine (which was at the time subtitled, "The Magazine for Young Adults") in the 1960s, her association with such organizations as the American Council on Education in

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[118] Banner, *Intertwined Lives*, 362, 394; Lapsley, *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 307. Banner and Lapsley concentrate their scholarship on the professional and personal dimensions of the close friendship between Mead and Benedict and their lives as women anthropologists.

[119] Mead's view is corroborated in several studies that include Banner and Lapsley (see previous note), as well as Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 208-09.

[120] Ibid.

[121] One particular instance from the 1930s is worth noting. In her article with Angela Gilliam, "Margaret Mead: From a Cultural/Historical Perspective," in *Confronting the Margaret Mead Legacy*, ed. Leonora Foerstel and Angela Gilliam (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 101-58, Leonora Foerstel recounts that Mead turned down a request by W. E. B. Du Bois to contribute an article to an encyclopedia of African American history in 1935. For another account see Lois W. Banner, *Intertwined Lives*, 394.

the 1950s reflects a professional commitment to advancing the status of women. Mead was a founding contributor to the Council's Commission on the Education of Women from its inception in 1953. The Commission was made up of a consortium of male and female deans and presidents of leading colleges and universities who documented American women's migration into higher education and the work force. Mead helped the Commission study women's motivation in attending college, the personal conflicts presented by new careers, male prejudice in the work force, and effects on child rearing practices.[122]

Louise Neumann has suggested that inconsistencies in Mead's message about women in the 1950s and 60s, coupled with the stigmatization of her ethnography by Betty Friedan, led most members of the next generation of "second wave" academic feminists in the late 1960s and 70s to ignore her contributions. Revisionist ethnography and gender studies among leading feminist anthropologists such as Rayna Reiter and Michelle Rosaldo barely took note of Mead, claiming that she had not gone far enough in the 1950s in challenging gender stereotypes.[123] Curiously however, other contemporary assessments of second wave feminism suggest that Mead's popular influence among

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[122] Commission president Opal D. David to Mead. 5 May 1958. American Council on Education, Container Number E 46. Papers and Correspondence of Margaret Mead, Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C. See also the correspondence in Container Number 46 from September 14, 1954 between Mead and then president Althea Kratz Hottel. Mead often discussed the conflicting roles of women in the column for *Redbook*, which ran for many years. In some instances she did seem to engage in gender stereotypes, only to draw back from them in others. And in other cases, she argued that the structure of the American family should have been restructured altogether to allow women to fully explore their potential. For examples of these opinions see Margaret Mead, "New Designs on Living," *Redbook* 135, no. 6 (October, 1970): 22, 24-25; "Margaret Mead Answers Questions about Drug Addiction, Primitive Humor, Male and Female Creativity, etc.," *Redbook* 120, no. 5 (March, 1963): 28, 30, 32.

[123] Michelle Rosaldo "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," in *Women, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), 17-42. See page 26.

college-age women was widespread. In a collection of retrospective essays on leading feminists in American history, Alice Rossi noted the wide readership of Mead's *Sex and Temperament* (1935) in the 1960s.[124] Despite Mead's own admonition in the 1968 edition that the book was not a feminist tract, Rossi argued that it generated enthusiasm among women who viewed anthropology as a path to liberation and self-fulfillment. Mead's celebrity as a public intellectual and noted feminist, her "blend of intellectual brilliance and down-to-earth humanness," as Rossi suggested, contributed to the popular perception that professional anthropology embodied the aims of feminism, civil rights, and the search for self-identity in the late 1960s.[125] As further proof, Rossi noted that thirty eight percent of women in graduate studies in 1969-70 were in anthropology.[126]

Mead often complained that those of her own generation such as Friedan and Baldwin hampered themselves with self-pity over past injustices and prejudices. Her endorsement of young activists and social science professionals in the 1960s fit with the counterculture belief that the older generation could not be counted on to finish the job it had started in the early twentieth century. The true pioneers of America's future, they argued, were young adults. Likening them to the early American immigrants and the Manus of the Admiralties, Mead argued that young Americans could make the quantum leaps in human potentiality and creativity that their parents could not.

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[124] See the entries in Rossi's text entitled "Cultural Stretch: Margaret Mead (b. 1910)," and "Margaret Mead: *Sex and Temperament*," in *The Feminist Papers: From Adams To de Beauvoir*, ed. Alice Rossi (New York: Bantam, 1973), 653-57, 658-71.

[125] Ibid., 654. See also Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York: Dell, 1968, c1963). See also the prefaces to the 1950 and 1963 editions in this volume.

[126] Rossi, "Cultural Stretch: Margaret Mead," 653.

Mead centered her agenda for the self in the 1950s squarely on the experience of growing up in a postwar society. As the 1960s unfolded the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and greater awareness of urban poverty and environmental pollution all took center stage. The embrace of social experimentation by the baby-boom generation in this decade proved the golden marketing opportunity that Mead (and Skinner) had sought in disseminating her reform agenda. Mead understood that, unlike the shakeup of World War Two, the rejection of traditional American culture in the 1960s might bring wholesale reform. Young people during this period were openly discussing social problems and actively seeking out alternatives on many fronts, including family and community structure, sexuality, gender, marriage, and educational practices. Mead knew that her revelations about the diversity of human nature and culture would resonate with a generation that had rejected their parent's values and immersed themselves in the radical politics of social protest and experimentation.

Mead's rise to celebrity status as the worldwide spokesperson for the young by the end of the 1960s attests to her success in rallying young Americans around cultural anthropology and holistic depictions of the re-humanized self. The postwar generation incorporated them into the politics of protest and the real-world search for alternative life paths. Mead's science of human diversity was taken as justification for these explorations, and Mead publicly supported them in this endeavor.

The popular press coverage of Mead's controversial opinions about the generation gap, recreational drug use, and American education illustrates her global currency among young people, and her use of their opinions in presenting the message of human potentiality. Mead, one reporter observed,

> [D]isclaims "belonging to the young" or wanting to be loved by them -- "a temptation to be resisted at all costs" -- yet there is no doubt that she uses the young as a tuning fork for her ideas, and that they, in turn, respond almost as a professional claque.... "I have traveled in 60 countries," [Ken] Heyman [her photographer] says, "and I find that in dealing with the young, her name is a universal password -- even in Russia."[127]

Mead, who lived in the hotbed of counterculture that was the East Village in New York City during the 1960s, centered much of her publicity campaigns on the experiences of young people.[128] It is also worth noting that, as with Skinner's *Walden Two* (1946), Mead's original study from the 1930s, *Growing Up in Samoa* (1928) also enjoyed a new and considerably expanded readership in the 1960s, selling 100,000 copies a year by the end of the decade.[129]

Mead went so far as to formalize the cultural revolution of the decade. Mead's book, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap*, first published in 1970, was a social manifesto similar to Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), and it sold 20,000 copies in its first year of publication.[130] It outlined her theory of social evolution and the generation gap.[131] Mead divided all cultures into three basic categories according to their social evolutionary state. "Postfigurative" cultures were fixed and

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[127] David Dempsey, "The Mead and Her Message," 23.

[128] This fact comes from a 1958 interview article by Arthur Herzog entitled "A Visit With Margaret Mead," in *Think* 24 (September, 1958): 9-11. See page 9.

[129] David Dempsey, "Mead and her Message," 1.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap* (Garden City, NY: Natural History Press, American Museum of Natural History, 1970). Mead's ideas about the three phases of social evolution, how the study of primitive cultures informed an understanding of modern cultures, and what social traits contributed most to their survivability, were articulated in a series of lectures collected for Mead's book, *Continuities in Cultural Evolution* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1964). See especially Mead's dicussion of what information about the "ecology" of the social setting was needed to learn how to cultivate environments in which genius and creativity could flourish. See pages 242-48.

relatively untouched by change; their social structure stayed much the same in each generation. Examples of postfigurative culture included the primitive societies that Mead had studied in New Guinea. "Cofigurative" cultures were in direct competition with a more predominant cultural tradition and were forced to adapt or do away with patterns that did not fit the new culture. Immigrant groups were good examples of these types of cultures. Rapid social change and the spread of technology, Mead claimed, produced "prefigurative" cultures. These cultures were disconnected permanently from older folkways.

A new generation of prefigurative, postwar Americans, Mead asserted, was charting a culture that their parents could not help them navigate. This immersion created the 'culture gap' between generations. Furthermore, Mead argued, the prefigurative youth culture needed careful study, since it would set future social patterns.

A particularly telling book advertisement for *Culture and Commitment* from January, 1970 reflected the public acknowledgement of Mead's role as a scientific spokesperson of youth and counterculture. It depicted a young man with long hair, beads draped around his neck, poised in a defiant stance, as if scoffing at his elders. The caption read -- "Margaret Mead listens to Him. Why Don't You?" The caption for the ad read:

> For four decades America's distinguished anthropologist has been listening to people and learning from them. From the people who still work with stone tools to those young people who choose not to work at all. With compassion and concern she shows that, for the first time in human history, parents cannot teach but must learn from their children. Both now find themselves in a science-fiction world where yesterday's truths are today's irrelevancies. *Culture and Commitment* goes beyond

> mere description of the generation gap. It offers courageous solutions to this worldwide dilemma.[132]

Similar in tone and gravity to descriptions of Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, this characterization of Mead marked her as an expert prognosticator. Unlike Skinner, however, Mead's scientific image was of a wise mother tending to her new brood of future-seekers, rather than of a detached laboratory scientist.

In the prefigurative conceptualization the youth rebellion of the 1960s could be interpreted more accurately as a disjuncture between pre- and postwar cultures in America. In Mead's estimation America had essentially become a new country in the postwar decades. In this new culture the search for *identity*, or *the self*, came to dominate American protest culture and counterculture. New visions based on race, class, age, gender, and culture -- a multiplication of new types of individuals -- took shape on the political landscape; this was due in part to the reform messages in Mead's cultural anthropology. Americans struggled in this period to understand what it meant to be white or black, male or female, young or old, in an international/intercultural environment that had been revealed by social science.

The search for identity also came to dominate the politics of youth protest in American higher education. "You can hardly be around a university without being aware of questions the students are asking about 'identity,'" quipped the president of the American Anthropological Association, George M. Foster at a national APA meeting in

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[132] From a book advertisement for *Culture and Commitment* from The Natural History Press in *The New York Times* (January 18, 1970): 248. Copy collected for the Margaret Mead Papers. Columbia University Archives. Columbia University. New York, NY.

1970.[133] Being at the forefront of disciplines that were forced to address contemporary issues in the 1960s, anthropology and the study of world cultures enjoyed widespread popularity as yet another forum for self-discovery. As the noted anthropologist Sol Tax observed in relation to Mead's career as a popularizer, Americans had become more interested since the end of the Second World War in comparing themselves to people around the globe. Anthropology and other human sciences faced the demand for a socially relevant and personally fulfilling educational experience, that education address "problems as current as racism, as demanding as poverty, and as popular as ecology."[134]

Just as scientific naturalism had challenged social science and democratic theory in the 1930s, cultural relativity, it seemed, had come home to roost in the 1960s. The search for individual identity saw a rejection of the postfigurative generation and a real-world search by the prefiguratives for a new culture, and new human potentialities. Mead joined American youth in the demand to help design an education tradition worthy of the task. As for the cause of youth rebellion, Mead observed,

> Youths including young teen-agers are rebelling against their lack of participation in the educational process which occupies such a large proportion of their lives. Here they share all the rebellions in the present-day world, where those who are being taught, cured, rehabilitated, governed or given welfare by those in charge are demanding that they be given some participation in determining how these things are to be done.... There is a questioning all over the world, by colonialized [*sic*] peoples, by minorities, by women, of an order of life in which others -- teachers, administrators, social workers, members of other classes and races, and of the other sex -- care for them, no matter how well intentioned the care may be.[135]

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[133] Taken from a quote cited by Israel Shenker, "Like the Tree of Life, Anthropology Sprouts Many Buds," *The New York Times* (November 20, 1970): 43.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Margaret Mead, "Establishment Ranks Infiltrated by Dissent," *The New York Times* (January 12, 1970): 51

Technology and a world perspective had thus divided the pre- and post-forties generations completely. No other generation before or after, Mead observed, would ever have the same perspective.[136] Young Americans, as Mead often described them, were like the early American colonists who left the Old World to explore personal and cultural frontiers in the new.[137] America's future, she contended, "must be centered in the children, those whose capabilities are least known, and whose choices must be left open."[138]

In this and other versions of what I have called the 'gospel of the self,' that Mead developed to address the self-actualization among women, minorities, youths and other groups in the postwar decades, there is a common prescription for solving the ills of society. If only Americans could free themselves from the psychology and social patterns of limitation, Mead promised, inequities and injustices could be resolved. Yet as we have seen, the politics involved in Mead's dissemination of this message to her peers and the public was not without negotiation and transformation.

As I have shown, Mead's attention to the politics of race, class, and gender, although circumvented in her written work, was evident nonetheless to many of her readers who themselves had a vested interest in the message of universal potentiality. In

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[136] See comments in the preface to *Culture and Commitment*, xvii-xx.

[137] From a column in the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper entitled "Dr. Margaret Mead Tells How It Isn't for Adults," (November 14, 1968) on a lecture Mead gave in Maryland to an unidentified professional group. This article was collected for the Papers of Margaret Mead. Columbia University Archives. Columbia University. New York, NY.

[138] From a report for *The New York Times* on a lecture given by Mead at the American Natural History Museum. See the article "Margaret Mead Finds Hope in Rebellion of Youth," *The New York Times* (March 16, 1969): 62. See John Leonard, review of *Culture and Commitment*, by Margaret Mead, "Dr. Mead vs. the Gloom Mongers," in *The New York Times* (January 8, 1970): 39. This review copy was collected for the Papers of Margaret Mead. Columbia University Archives. Columbia University. New York, NY.

the final chapter of *The Feminine Mystique* entitled "The Forfeited Self," for example, Friedan observed that, in the case of the 'feminine' self, Mead and her colleagues had sent a conflicting message. Among the community of humanist liberal-democratic social scientists that included Mead, Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and others, the philosophy of the self-actualized human being seemed to apply mostly to a male-gendered society. In playing to the conventions held by both her colleagues and the public at large, Friedan asserted, Mead's anthropology of the self made the choice between the 'liberated female' and the 'well adjusted' housewife all the more confusing in the 1950s.

As di Leonardo claims, Mead's popular image, even today, as a liberal-feminist is persistent but mistaken.[139] Unlike other reform advocates Mead did not radicalize her views on female potential or civil rights, nor did she couch her message to women in terms of an *oppressive* American culture. Instead she avoided these "power-relation" issues, as di Leonardo terms them, by sticking to the politically safe and expedient argument that a break with social norms and prejudices had to start with the individual's rejection of what I will term the *psychology of limitation*, rather than by embracing the politics and ideology of victimization.[140] The psychology of limitation is related to Mead's idea of human potential. Adaptive potentialities remain untapped, she claimed, when the individual is unable to look beyond his or her immediate psychological or social reality.

Mead's politics of the 'prefigurative' self in the young, as opposed to that in the gendered selves of adult men and women, was more consistent. In the 1950s, as I have

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[139] di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home*, 363.

shown, Mead was insistent that children not simply conform to social conventions, but that they act independently as well. In the 1960s Mead linked this message to the antiestablishment youth rebellion. In offering tacit support to the rejection of educational and social standards, Mead strategically re-introduced the question of women, minorities, and human potentiality in general. She aligned herself with the youth challenge to the 'establishment' while also preserving her independence as a scientific expert. Clearly the political and social climate of the 1960s and 70s left more room for Mead to politicize her messages about the self without risking 'establishment' abandonment, either in her own profession or in government circles. Certainly her preeminence by this time as a scientific icon also made this more feasible. As I have argued, however, scientific images of the self were not appropriated by public constituencies without qualification.

The Male and Female of Science and Popular Iconography by the 1970s

By the early 1970s, Mead and Skinner were both regarded as icons of social science in American popular culture. Celebrity had allowed them to transcend academia and become public intellectuals and scientific sages, prognosticating the future of humanity in social manifestos that captured widespread readership and media coverage. As a soothsayer for postwar Americans, Mead, unlike Skinner, rescued social science from its earlier reputation as an exclusionary, impersonal, and enigmatic profession. Changing the public image of science and the scientist was, Mead understood, a prerequisite to constructing scientific institutions that were relevant to contemporary American culture.

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[140] Ibid., 366.

The advent of the 'corporate' scientist in the 1950s, ensconced in the military/industrial complex, contributed to what professional scientists themselves recognized at the time as a growing rift between science and mainstream American culture. Such sentiments were encapsulated in a report from the 1956 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Members of the Committee on the Social Aspects of Science warned of an "impending crisis in the relationship between science and American society."[141]

> This crisis is being generated by a basic disparity: At a time when decisive economic, political, and social processes have become profoundly dependent upon science, the discipline has failed to attain its appropriate place in the management of public affairs.[142]

This phenomenon was well known already to humanists such as Jacob Bronowski who had explored it in his book, *Science and Human Values* (1956).[143] Science had grown exponentially in the years after the war, and Americans had recognized its potential to either advance human progress or destroy it.[144] The proliferation of technology fed the public image of scientists and engineers as inhuman technologists rather than as creative thinkers interested in human affairs.

Institutional expansion and specialization after the Second World War furthered the image of the aloof, elite, and misanthropic scientist, Mead said. By mid-century

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[141] Quoted first by a reporter for *The Nation* commenting on the AAAS annual meeting held on December 31, 1956. See D. Cort, "Thousands of Scientists," *The Nation* 184 (January 12, 1957): 33.

[142] Ibid.

[143] See the editorial in the same issue of *The Nation* noted above entitled "Biggest Story of the Year," on page 30. See also Jacob Bronowski, *Science and Human Values* (New York: J. Messner, 1956).

[144] Cort, "Thousands of Scientists," 33.

scientists had come to be regarded in popular culture as monkish and withdrawn. As Mead said in her 1959 article for the AAAS journal *Daedalus*,

> The scientist or the schoolboy (it is almost always a boy) who is identified by teachers and fellow students as a future scientist is set apart by the very nature of his interests and is regarded by *non*-scientists as a person who has restricted himself by choice to the company of other scientists, unsuitable [therefore] both as marriage partner and as friend.[145]

The professional scientist, although admired and respected for his extensive training and know-how, was portrayed often in the media as an alien being, as what Mead described as an inhuman and "mad, godless 'brain.'" In popular lore the scientist was interested primarily in "dead things," he was a cold, calculating machine, devoid of human warmth or a desire for discovery in the world of living nature.[146] As Mead observed,

> We are, in fact, in danger of developing -- as other civilizations before us have developed -- special esoteric groups who can communicate only with each other and who can accept as neophytes and apprentices only those individuals whose intellectual abilities, temperamental bents, and motivations are like their own. A schismogenic process is under way that is self-perpetuating and self-aggravating.[147]

This public image of the scientist, of a cold and calculating "brain," was reflected in a study conducted by Mead and her long time colleague in anthropology, Rhoda Metraux, that is still considered a classic. Mead and Metraux conducted the study for the AAAS; they surveyed attitudes about science and scientists among 35,000 American high school students. Their findings were published in *Look* magazine in 1958 in an article

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[145] Margaret Mead, *Daedalus* (Publication of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science) 88 (1959): 139-46. See page 139.

[146] Ibid., 140.

[147] Ibid. See also Mead's footnote reference here to "schismogenic" cultural phenomena in Gregory Bateson's "Ethnological Contrast, Competition and Schismogenesis," and "Epilogue 1958," in Bateson, *Naven: A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 171-97, 280-303.

entitled "How American Youth Sees the Scientist: The Dangerous Godless Brain."[148] Most students expressed respect for scientific contributions to society. But their view of the scientist almost always was de-humanized. Their image was of an older bespectacled man in a white coat surrounded by the instrumentation of the laboratory. Although he was wise, precise, knowledgeable, dedicated, and honest, he was also coldly objective and unfeeling, possessing few social skills. He was dull -- much like a disembodied brain. The scientist was either solitary in his endeavors, a lone "genius," or he epitomized the "organization man," a corporate scientist. He was described often as ill suited for family life, living on the margin of society, contributing great things but keeping to himself. In many respects Mead noted, these images "[a]ll represent deviations from the accepted way of life, from being a normal, friendly human being who is like other people and gets along with other people."[149]

With respect to the popular iconography of science in the late 1960s and early 70s, Mead and Skinner present an interesting contrast. Although Skinner had worked to connect his technologies of teaching and his utopian visions to real-world human problems, his was still the picture of a calculating, godless brain whose promise of social salvation came at the price of individual freedom and autonomy. Although revered for his behavioral insights into human nature, Skinner was seen as a detached technologist and engineer.

Mead in the popular media, however, enjoyed a reputation as a culturally connected scientist and empathetic person who was concerned with both the everyday

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[148] Margaret Mead, "How American Youth Sees the Scientist: The Dangerous Godless Brain," *Look* 22, no. 2 (January 21, 1958): 20-27.

[149] Ibid., 25.

issues of living and the bigger problems of postwar society. Mead did not get her insights on human nature from the laboratory on campus but from that of primitive and modern cultures from around the world. She listened and responded attentively to postwar mothers and their children as they charted an unknown future. She understood the frustration and rebellion of youth, women, and minorities in the 1960s and gave them scientific legitimacy with her anthropological reflections on racism, feminism, and the counterculture. To a public in need of guidance, as one commentator recalled in 1970,

> Mead is a visible and willing plunger into modern social controversy who projects herself as a global prophetess on almost every subject that concerns the human condition. To a society troubled by its own shifting folkways, and hungry for guidance in coping with them, she is a poor man's anthropologist, a mediator between high erudition and the middle-brow mind.[150]

Mead, as the layperson's social scientist, enjoyed a level of celebrity and public exposure that was rivaled by few other scientists. She gave television appearances and hosted numerous public speaking engagements. She received (and gave back) endorsements by politicians such as President Jimmy Carter and celebrated intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell. Some regarded Mead as an American national treasure. In obituaries and dedications upon her death in 1978 the "aura," that was Margaret Mead was described variously as a "national oracle," a "general of modern feminism," and "our own Madame Curie," with the wisdom of "an Old Testament Prophet," in her ability to explain human nature, and explain Americans to themselves.

More interesting, however, is how Mead's scientific persona was framed in terms of her gender. Americans seemed to find Mead especially appealing not only for her

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[150] David Dempsey, "The Mead and Her Message," 23.

scientific insights but also because of the way in which her status as a feminist, mother, and caretaker was intertwined with her presentation of human behavior in anthropology. Indeed, Mead often was described in these same dedications as the "grandmother of us all," a "mother to the world," a woman scientist whose outward appearance and manner, that of a wise, "homespun Midwestern woman," by one account, fit well with her persona as a motherly figure to a generation of postwar Americans.[151] As Mead undoubtedly understood, being regarded as what one writer called "the den mother to all humanity" ensured her a common ground with her audience.[152] This may explain why Mead was careful not to associate herself with the radicalized versions of feminism, counterculture, and civil rights movements in the 1950s and 60s.

In Mead and Skinner we have two icons of American social science; each encapsulated different images of the self, methodologies of science, and politics of social management. Their public images were cast at least partly along gender lines. Skinner embodied the picture of male-oriented technocracy, with its dehumanizing, cold objectivity and attention to precision and efficiency. Skinnerian science was unemotional; it presumed no human uniqueness, no freedom or autonomy, and no inner life of the mind. Mead's 'motherly' anthropology on the other hand reflected an organic/holistic view of humans as thinking and feeling creatures intertwined with the inner life of personality and the outer world if culture. Mead had embraced human

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[151] All of these characterizations are quoted from obituaries written on the occasion of her death in November of 1978. See the obituary articles "Grandmother of Us All," and Ken Wills, "Margaret Mead dead at 76, Prof Famed for Tribal Study," in the Margaret Mead Papers, Columbia University Archives, Columbia University, New York, NY. See also Alden Whitman, "Margaret Mead is Dead of Cancer at 76," in *The New York Times* (November 16, 1978): A1.

[152] This characterization was taken from an undated fund raising pamphlet entitled "A Reverence for Life," produced for the Margaret Mead Fund for the Advancement of Anthropology sponsored by the American

autonomy and aspects of neo-Freudian therapeutic psychology, whereas Skinner had rejected them as irrelevant. Mead took advantage of her public appropriation as a female scientist depicting the American self from a mother's viewpoint.

The gender politics of Meadian and Skinnerian visions of the self also seemed to parallel liberal/Democratic and conservative/Republican perspectives. The Meadian self embodied an open, democratic society with links to liberal progressive social science. Skinner's vision of the self, in contrast, was born of technocratic progressivism, Taylorism, and the cult of efficiency. His audiences were often those in business and industry associated with economic and political conservatism.

Conclusion

In the postwar era Mead selectively used comparative cultural anthropology and her vision of human potentiality to help Americans adapt to an unfolding postwar society. In the postwar decades Americans were forced to re-think their conceptualizations of gender, methods of child rearing, and the structure of family and community. This left room for social scientists such as Mead to chart new professional territory and launch careers as purveyors of expert advice in the mass media. Yet as we have seen, Mead's message of human potentiality among women, minorities, and the youth counterculture was not appropriated in an unqualified way. A multiplicity of scientifically inspired selves is evident in Mead's marketing of the primitive 'other' in the 1950s and 60s, and

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Museum of Natural History. See related leaflets and articles on Mead in the Columbia University Archives. Columbia University. New York, NY.

in the political rhetoric of her audiences who used these images of the self for different political and personal goals.

As Mead had argued in countless publications during the 1950s and 60s the diversity of human culture, and the complexity of personality development in each, demanded an interdisciplinary social science for exploring untapped human potential. Unlike the picture of programmable humanity that Skinner promoted in his utopia, Mead stressed the examination of world cultures in searching for clues about how human potential might be tapped. While their plans for cultivating the modern self differed considerably, Skinner and Mead, as demonstrated herein, share in what Fred Matthews has characterized as the broad professional enthusiasm for scientifically inspired social reform. Both Mead and Skinner recognized the centrality of research in education, for example. Like the individual in society, educational institutions needed to be capable of rapid adaptation to new social conditions. These aims are represented in Skinner's technologies of teaching and in Mead's rhetoric about the school as a community training center.

An emerging science of social modification, Mead argued, had to work against the temptation of reductionism. Society and social science were both complex affairs. Mead argued against those in social science like Skinner who attempted to oversimplify humanity and society. As she observed in 1960 of the popularity of behavioral technology and theory,

> We've now reached the stage where we're ready to think about invention in the field of human behavior. But we've come up against some snags in trying to make inventions in human behavior that are quite different from the snags that one faces in the physical sciences. There are some people who think that we ought to be able to do something like the Manhattan Project -- just collect a bunch of good behavioral scientists, lock them up

> somewhere or even not lock them up, give them plenty of money and a few computers and those other things that some people think go with the human sciences -- a lot of rats. Or some people would allow Rhesus monkeys and chimps and grey-legged geese and a few other things and say "All right now, get on with it and create a peace bomb," for instance. Or something that will be as effective for peace as the atom bomb was for the war. Now those of us who were interested in this the last 25 years or so since we've begun to try to make inventions on the human sciences are truly aware that it isn't as easy as this. So far no attempts to solve human problems in which you sit down and work out a formula, and set up a procedure, and then announce that this is the way to save the world have so far worked.[153]

Mead acknowledged the powerful attraction that promising technological inventions such as teaching machines held. Audiences in business and education, Mead observed, had clamored for such marvels. With the continued divergence between the experimental and therapeutic branches of social science, the disciplinary unification necessary to "become conscious participants in [human] evolution" had not yet, as Mead observed, come to pass. Nevertheless, there were no tantalizingly quick escapes, no "crash programs to produce absolute solutions for human behavior rapidly," as she said.[154] The best prescription for contemporary social science and American society, Mead argued, was the continued study of cultures in learning how to create environments where human creativity could flourish.

Aside from professional debates over the future of social science, the popularization of Mead's vision of the self in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s was not without its own history in popular culture. As demonstrated here, the social and political implications of her vision, like that of Skinner's were not lost on Americans struggling to

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[153] Margaret Mead, "Transcript of Address by Dr. Margaret Mead, Annual Meeting, The Menninger Foundation." 8 October 1960, Menninger Foundation folders. Container E 80, Folder 1. Papers of Margaret Mead. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Washington, D. C., 4-5.

[154] Ibid., 6.

define themselves and their place in postwar American culture. Mead carefully modified the message of limitless human potentiality to cater to different public audiences. Mead's refusal to enter the politics of radical feminism and civil rights activism indicated her awareness that scientific depictions of the self could not, by mere virtue of their scientific grounding, transcend American social conventions. The politics of postwar America had to be considered when marketing new visions of humanity. Only when the liberal-progressive self in Mead's science of culture met with the era of social protest and counterculture in the 1960s did her hopes for its popularization achieve their greatest heights.

CHAPTER SIX

THE JANUS FACES OF THE SELF IN AMERICAN SCIENCE AND CULTURE: EXPLORING THE CAREERS OF B. F. SKINNER AND MARGARET MEAD AS CULTURAL PHENOMENA

In recounting the scientific and public careers of B. F. Skinner and Margaret Mead in the decades before and after the Second World War, my intent in this study has been to examine their contrasting depictions of human nature from a cultural, rather than a purely scientific, standpoint. Most of the historical scholarship on Skinner and Mead has been confined to internalist accounts of their contributions to social science. Some scholars have begun to connect the scientific and social philosophies of Skinner and Mead more thoroughly to broader trends in the twentieth-century American experience. There is still a need, however, for scholarship that interconnects the historiography of American cultural history with that of the history of the social sciences. Addressing Skinner and Mead as representatives of American culture demonstrates on the one hand how such phenomena as progressivism and other social reform movements, technocracy, and changes in family and community structure influenced the scientific depiction of the self, and on the other, how these depictions informed debates about the fate of the individual in modern society.

The objective of this study has been threefold. First, I have addressed the lives of Mead and Skinner not merely with regard to their scientific achievements or their professional status but also as members of modern American culture. In connecting their early intellectual and scientific training to American progressivism, I illustrate how

Skinner and Mead each began to craft research methodologies in the 1920s that reflected an active appropriation of social reform ideology. There existed both liberal-democratic and technocratic strains of social reform theory during the opening decades of the twentieth century, and these perspectives had a significant influence on the development of scientific methodology in the social sciences.

The careers of Skinner and Mead reflect two competing approaches to the self and to social engineering. Their scientific depictions of human nature were informed by their involvement with the politics of social reform during the Interwar period, the Cold War, and the 1960s social protest movements. Mead and Skinner both believed in the adaptive potential of humanity and the importance of using science to manage and organize society; these were articles of faith in many progressive era reform philosophies. Despite this shared view, however, my narratives of Skinner and Mead demonstrate how their respective scientific treatments of the self led to very different approaches to contemporary social issues. Skinner's mechanistic approach to the self and society in his unique brand of radical behaviorism was inspired by technocratic visions of social management that emphasized control and efficiency. Both of these management themes, as historian Martha Banta has observed, were dominant in twentieth century American culture. Mead, on the other hand, drew inspiration for her cultural anthropology from the ideology of democratic social reform. Liberal democratic strains of progressivism, with their attention to the neglected voices of the poor, immigrants, minorities, and women, shaped her humanistic and holistic approach to the self. Humanism also figured heavily in Mead's conception of an advisory, rather than a controlling and manipulative, role for social science in social administration.

In discussing their fame as social critics in the 1950s and 60s, I also have demonstrated how Mead and Skinner helped re-map the boundaries between social science and American postwar culture during a time when the therapeutic "helping" professions enjoyed widespread public attention. Mead and Skinner contributed to the public authority of cultural anthropology and behavioral psychology respectively by crossing professional borders and seeking out public audiences. I have examined the rhetorical, technological, and conceptual strategies that Skinner and Mead used to launch their careers as public intellectuals and scientific experts in the 1940s and 50s.

Skinner and Mead each skillfully employed marketing strategies to advance their scientific celebrity. The rhetorical styles of their published work for popular audiences, for example, reflected their keen desire to have scientific knowledge products become associated with solutions to human problems. Mead and Skinner each employed several metaphors related to the concept of social change -- a central theme in intellectual, scientific, and popular debates about postwar American culture -- to promote their respective visions of the self and society. Both discussed the relationship between individuals and the social environment with regard to the evolutionary concept of adaptation. Both often invoked the venue of the laboratory and the rhetoric of human potentiality to discuss technologies and strategies of education and parenting reform, comprehensive plans for community management, and the improvement of human nature through science. Skinner and Mead modified their knowledge products and social critiques to accommodate new reform constituencies in the 1950s and 60s, each of which had specific designs on the self.

A second main component of my study addresses the popularization of Skinnerian and Meadian science, technology, and social ideology amidst public discourse on the changing image of modern humanity. I examine some of the particular ways in which Skinnerian and Meadian social theories and technologies were appropriated and used by Americans. Anxious parents, women entering the workforce, feminists, educators, businesspeople, and young counterculture radicals, for example, had designs on scientific depictions of the self that went beyond what their inventors intended. In addressing the social reform ideologies and approaches to the self espoused by Skinner and Mead, I have made a more thoroughgoing examination of how different groups of Americans appropriated them for use in adjusting to postwar life. In the 1950s and 60s, Mead, Skinner, and other prominent social scientists catered to a growing public demand for innovations in child rearing techniques and education, as well as for new insights into personal fulfillment, the social roles of men and women, and social management alternatives.

Skinner's baby tender technology, for example, was not well received among new postwar parents who, despite Skinner's assurances to the contrary, saw it as a dehumanizing technology. In Mead's case, it is more difficult to assess the reception of her advice literature on child rearing and human potential. Her mixed messages regarding female human potential in particular were singled out by critics such as Betty Friedan who accused Mead of betraying the feminist cause. In the late 1950s and early 60s, Skinner's technologies of programmed instruction gained considerable commercial support from companies wanting to capitalize on the contemporary public debate about a Cold War crisis in American education. Public school administrators and the textbook

publishing industry embraced a mechanistic vision of the student in experimenting with teaching technologies that were designed to maximize the speed and efficiency of learning. Many critics denounced these technologies, however, as yet another instance of technocratic dehumanization. Despite their contrasting visions of the self, however, Skinner and Mead both looked to the business community for innovations in education reform. In the 1960s Skinner's and Mead's calls to explore social management alternatives also became part of the counterculture challenge to the status quo. Groups of young communitarians sought alternatives to mainstream living during this period, and some interpreted Skinner's *Walden Two* thought experiment as a humanistic, rather than a technocratic, blueprint for an experimental community. Mead's published work, speeches, and televised debates with prominent intellectuals also spawned a popular interest among college students for using comparative anthropology as a pathway to self-discovery.

The study of the reciprocal relationship between science and its many professional and public audiences demands that historians relinquish assumptions about the separateness and transcendence of science that continue to color much of the historical work on Skinner and Mead.[1] Scientific concepts, methods, language, and theories have histories that lie beyond the established epistemological and professional

[1] For further discussion about these assumptions see Paul Forman, "Independence, Not Transcendence, for the Historian of Science," *Isis* 82 (1999): 71-86. See page 85. See also Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey, "Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections on the History of Science Popularization and Science in Popular Culture," *History of Science* 32 (1994): 237-67, especially page 241. The tension between constructivist and idealist approaches to the history of science over the last three decades has resulted in fundamental changes in how historians address epistemological assumptions about science as a unique human endeavor. As Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey have argued, no special or "separate sphere" of science exists outside of culture. Although most historians would readily admit that history is not a philosophically impartial endeavor, historians of science have at times allowed assumptions regarding the inherent social authority, transcendence, and linear progress of science into their scholarship. Increased

borders of science. As many historians have observed, science is part of culture, and its content often reflects this on both technical and ideological levels. The institutional organization of science, the use of language and rhetoric by scientists to achieve professional consensus and forge public authority, and the intermingling of cultural and experimental meanings in scientific terminology -- these all reflect the entrenchment of science in culture. Conversely, historians also now recognize that public audiences do not passively absorb scientific knowledge products. These products do not remain conceptually inert. In their public consumption scientific ideas invariably undergo transformation.

Processes of conceptual exchange, mediation, and translation, as historians of science have discovered, also are not confined to science proper. Science and scientific communities are shaped in part by public audiences. These audiences have specific political, intellectual, philosophical, technological, and social designs on science's utility and social function. Social and cultural histories of science in popular culture thus have challenged traditional "dissemination" models of popularization and have undermined stereotypes about who science's audience(s) really were. A truly cultural history of Skinner and Mead must therefore address the ethnography and geography of science in culture by examining their public audiences in postwar America.

A third and final aim of the present study is to explore how the juxtaposition of these two prominent social scientists enhances our historical understanding of the ongoing debate in modern American culture over the fate of the self. I will use my narratives on the public careers of Skinner and Mead as case studies in considering, by

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awareness about such assumptions will be important, as Paul Forman notes, as we begin to explore the history of the human sciences.

way of conclusion, how conflicting images of human nature in modern American social science reflect a central cultural tension between the desire for unencumbered human freedom and independence on the one hand, and the need for mechanisms of social control that will help society run well on the other. In detailing the public interpretations of Skinnerian and Meadian visions of the self, I have argued that their reception in postwar American culture was nonlinear and multifaceted. The fact that Skinnerian and Meadian visions of the self catapulted their inventors to public celebrity in postwar American culture at the same time, however, indicates that Americans have learned to embrace both images of human nature. We apply both images of the self selectively in defining individual identity and refining our myriad systems of individual and social management in modern life.

In the following sections, I will further address the issues of how scientists can be viewed as representatives of culture, how scientific social authority was established by Skinner and Mead in the postwar years, and how scientific visions of human nature were translated and transformed by public constituencies. In concluding my discussion, I will offer suggestions on how my study can inform our understanding of the self in postwar American culture.

Artifacts of Culture: The Science of Mead and Skinner in the American Context

The aura of scientific social management in progressivism at the turn of the century had a profound effect on the subsequent development of the social science professions in the 1920s and 30s. An emphasis on environmental and behavioral

approaches to human psychology, anthropology, and sociology became more prevalent in the research methodologies of social scientists. There were, however, fundamental differences in the way that progressive reform philosophies influenced the intellectual and scientific training of social scientists. B. F. Skinner and Margaret Mead each represent a different legacy of progressive era approaches to human nature in the social sciences. Although neither of them thought of themselves as progressives, Skinner and Mead nevertheless patterned their respective research methodologies after technocratic and liberal-democratic visions of social management that had their origins in progressive social reform movements. Skinner and Mead developed and modified these visions during the Interwar and postwar decades and drew upon cultural themes and social issues to construct their visions of the self. Invoking the symbolism of archaeology, Skinner and Mead can be examined historically as cultural 'artifacts,' i. e., as representative scientists whose careers reveal much about the connections between broader trends in American culture and the development of the social sciences.[2]

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[2] This is similar to David Bakan's characterization of Watsonian behaviorism as one particular "cultural expression" of progressive era reform ideology. See David Bakan, "Behaviorism and American Urbanization," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 2 (1966): 5-28.

The analysis of Skinner and Mead as artifacts of American culture also relates to broader trends in the historiography of science itself. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the groundbreaking work of Steven Shapin and the British school of social studies in science, for example, introduced a more genuinely 'ethnographic' approach to the study of scientists and their professional and public audiences. See their investigation into how professional consensus and social authority were built through the design and public presentation of chemistry experiments in the British Royal Society in the seventeenth century in the landmark study, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Scholarship on the lives of scientists has also begun in the last two decades to address the epistemological relationships between their scientific philosophies and technological wares on the one hand, and their intellectual and social training in the broader culture milieu on the other. How, historians have asked, can scientists be studied as representatives of a particular culture? To what extent does their scientific work reflect personal opinions, values, and agendas that come from outside science proper?

Ethnographic, sociological, and statistical studies of laboratory life by historians such as Bruno Latour and Stephen Woolgar were also begun in the late 1970s and early 80s. Known collectively as the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK), this literature played a key role in contextualizing experimental scientific practice as well as the production of scientific facts. Over the last two decades this area of scholarship has revealed how the rhetoric of scientific writing, the processes of communication and

Although the social sciences saw their most important period of expansion during and after the Second World War, professional growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century followed a sharp rise in industrialization and urbanization. As older patterns of community, family structure, and work underwent transformation during this period, new forms of social administration were needed. Local control of the community was transferred to a growing cadre of professional managers who populated new bureaucratic agencies. By the end of the nineteenth century radical changes to the American social landscape had produced a number of political, corporate, municipal, and moral reform movements that encompassed progressivism. Many new organizations with grass roots, or with corporate/industrial backing, were formed to tackle the social problems of urbanization such as poverty, urban decay, unemployment, immigration, and factory inefficiency.

Not all reform activity during the progressive era was populist. Less historical attention has been given to the fact that many progressive reform initiatives also originated among the ranks of middle and upper class professionals and industrialists who, under the banner of scientific efficiency and expediency in industry and municipal administration, sought to increase and consolidate their social status and political influence. The need for information, scientific methodology, and expertise in running

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consensus-building among professional networks of scientists, the use of imagery and metaphor in describing natural phenomena, and the relationships between scientists and their audiences (both professional and public), factors into a sophisticated treatment of the history science and technology. Scientific "facts," from a sociological perspective, also have come to be seen as contingent, localized knowledge products, born of specific group contexts. For further discussion, see the classic study by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979). See related comments in Jan Golinski, "The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory: Sociological Approaches in the History of Science, *Isis* 81 (1990): 492-505 and Patrick Curry, "Astrology in Early Modern England: The Making of a Vulgar Knowledge," in *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Steven Pumfrey et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 274-91.

bureaucracy marked a growth period for the management professions. It also saw the transfer of social authority away from average citizens and into the hands of credentialed experts on many fronts. The professional classes invoked the virtues of rationality, efficiency, organization and systematic control in all areas of urban administration, as well as in personal life. The promotion of scientific efficiency as the pathway to social reform among these 'management progressives' mirrored a national fascination with efficiency, especially during the Roosevelt years.

A prominent embodiment of this vision of scientifically inspired social management was Frederick W. Taylor. Although Taylorism is often associated with technocratic dehumanization, its emphasis on establishing control over human behavior in social and industrial engineering was a cultural theme that reverberated throughout the social sciences in the early twentieth century. It was one of the most influential expressions of a basic reform goal held in common by different groups of progressives. Taylorism's legacy among socially and economically conservative progressives is clearly seen in professional associations that were dedicated to the management of society by engineers. The promotional efforts of the Taylorites and the technocrats helped spawn the disciplines of human relations, industrial engineering, and business management in the1930s, 40s and 50s. Yet as historian Guy Alchon has observed, Taylorism was only one among several manifestations of management-oriented progressivism in the 1920s and 30s that were connected to both liberal-democratic and technocratic perspectives on social reform among philanthropists, social scientists, social workers, industrialists, and politicians.[3] In considering the effect of early twentieth-century social reform ideology

[3] See Guy Alchon, *The Invisible Hand of Planning: Capitalism, Social Science, and the State in the 1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

on the development of the social sciences, it is important, therefore, to observe that there were not merely two opposing progressive viewpoints on society and the self but an entire spectrum of ideas that social scientists selected from and combined in a host of different ways. This was certainly the case for Mead and Skinner.

Even in the early stages of their careers in science, both Skinner and Mead incorporated progressive political perspectives on social reform and management into their scientific depictions of the self. These perspectives were informed and modified in successive decades through their experience of national economic depression, national crisis, and world war. Their philosophical commitments to scientifically inspired social management, although originally inspired by different strains of progressivism, nevertheless remained part of the social theories and visions of the self that they developed and deployed in the public arena in the postwar decades. My analysis demonstrates that Skinner and Mead each used their research on human nature, contextualized as it was by the American experience, to engage such pressing societal issues as the viability of American democracy and the future course of the individual, the family, the community, and the science of social engineering.

Mead's roots in liberal-democratic progressivism stemmed from a reaction among humanist professionals against reductionism in social science, and against dehumanizing forms of technocracy in general. Humanist social science aimed to lift people up from poverty, racism, and ignorance through the holistic study of human potential and cultural diversity. Mead's comparative cultural anthropology celebrated the individual and his/her unique potential. She and other like-minded colleagues combined their liberal progressive politics with scientific perspectives on the psychology and anthropology of

the self in the 1920s and 30s. This community of psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists, one that included Ruth Benedict, Lawrence Frank, Gardner Murphy, Edward Sapir, and John Dollard among many others, celebrated the inner life of the self and its dynamic connection to a complex and multi-layered social environment.

It was through Boasian anthropology that Mead, unlike the mechanists and objectivists in social science, came to her view of the self as a dynamic whole, rather than as a collection of behaviors and traits. Her early research into the lives of both American immigrants and primitive peoples in Samoa and New Guinea illustrated for her the central role of cultural change on variation in gender identity, adolescence, personality, and perceived intelligence. Her groundbreaking work in cultural anthropology served as a powerful challenge to the assumed universality of Western cultural conventions. Mead's unique ethnographic methodology utilized interdisciplinary cultural studies and the use of various sociological, ethnographic, and psychological techniques to examine primitive and modern cultures. Mead's "culture and personality" rubric in the 1930s examined the broader dimensions of culture through the lens of the individual.

In Mead's case, her popular books on Samoa and New Guinea and her academic research into the connections between culture and individual personality in the 1930s reflected her desire to challenge psychic and cultural reductionism and determinism in the social sciences. In assessing the ideological roots of Mead's cultural anthropology, Rosalind Rosenberg has gone so far as to characterize her as a "progressive social engineer." What is lacking in the Mead scholarship, however, as Mead's own daughter

has recently observed, is a history that examines her impact on post-World War Two debates about social reform.[4]

Mead used her comparative studies of gender, family, community, and social mores among primitive cultures to critique the American political system in the late 1930s and its failure to deliver on the reforms promised by early twentieth-century progressives and their political and managerial inheritors. Mead deployed her cross-cultural studies of cooperation and competition in the late 1930s to scientifically defend the superiority of American democracy over fascism and communism. Democracy was being challenged on the home front and in Europe, and some Americans began to question its effectiveness in managing complex urban society. In response, Mead and her colleagues pursued scientific research that demonstrated the destructive social and psychological effects of fascism and totalitarianism (both highly competitive and dehumanizing systems of government) on individuals and cultures. In her highly rhetorical critique of American culture, *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (1942), Mead publicly addressed the issue of American national character (a concept developed under the culture/personality rubric) and its unique suitability for the defense of democracy. Using the forum of child rearing and education, Mead warned, however, that a lack of parental clarity about the appropriateness of cooperative and competitive behavior in different social settings, for example, could undermine American democracy. Instilling indecision in the American child, Mead argued, was tantamount to building a nation that lacked the necessary resolve in facing a global war on democratic values. In Mead's somewhat jingoistic exhortations against American isolationism in *Powder* at the

[4] Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 207-37; Mary C. Bateson, "Continuities in Insight and Innovation: Toward a

beginning of the war, she warned that democracy might be wiped out if American national virtues and character were not re-invigorated to fight fascism.

Mead's public ruminations in *Powder* about the potential shortcomings of American national character paralleled her active involvement in the war effort. Her participation in wartime government committees afforded her the opportunity in the mid- to late 1940s to market the concept of national character to various government agencies and also to make a comparative assessment of social management agencies in different countries involved in the war. There was a pressing need in the immediate postwar years to build the kind of social infrastructure that could meet the changing needs of families and communities in molding and educating well-adjusted children.

The British agency system embodied much of what Mead hoped could be accomplished in the American context. She found much to praise in the centrality of "citizen advice committees" in British social services. Highlighting the spirit of cooperation between professional social scientist and members of the community, Mead stressed the need for balance between bureaucratic social management and local community control. Professional social science in this regard should be fully integrated with British communities. Mead's idealization of the distinctively British style of participatory, group-oriented problem solving strategies, institutional flexibility in accommodating cultural diversity and local variations, and lack of professional arrogance and manipulation among social scientists and management personnel, were all characteristic of the type of social services that Mead hoped would emerge in the postwar American system. This system would be especially important, Mead thought, in counteracting the American tendency toward professional arrogance and an obsession

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Biography of Margaret Mead," *American Anthropologist* 82 (1980): 270-77.

with objectivity in the social sciences. Mead's analysis of British social services for the Office of War Information is an early indication of what would later become her fully formed philosophy of social management in the 1960s. In this system managers would be advised, but not controlled, by members of an interdisciplinary cadre of professional social scientists with expertise in a new 'science of culture.'

In considering Mead's perspectives on the proper role of social science in social management, as I have shown, one can also elucidate the active incorporation of progressive liberal-democratic political philosophy into her scientific depiction of the self. Her vision of the individual as a unique, dynamic system of potentialities in harmony with cultural surroundings illustrates her liberal-progressive dedication to human dignity and liberation. Mead lobbied against the kind of scientific technocracy that worked against a more participatory and integrated society. American culture and American social science, in her estimation, had to undergo reformation together. Social science had to uphold a humanized self as well the democratic social values that made possible this vision of the self.

Although not directly influenced by Taylor or the Taylorites, Skinner's emphasis on the precise control of animal and human behavior in his scientific research, in contrast, was remarkably similar to the Taylorian obsession with control and efficiency in the late nineteenth-century industrial workplace. As with Taylorism and the gospel of industrial efficiency, Skinnerian radical behaviorism eventually gave rise to technocratic visions of a science of society. Like Taylor, Skinner dedicated himself to ridding experimental methods of all extraneous theoretical and philosophical speculation. In this endeavor Skinner (and other social scientists) was inspired by Baconian science, the physicalism of

Ernst Mach, and the biochemical reductionism of Jacques Loeb. It is also telling of trends in social science toward precision and control that the environmental factor of *time* became central to Skinner's development of operant behaviorism in the 1930s, just as it had for Taylor in his analyses of factory efficiency the 1890s. Martha Banta's analysis of how the rubrics of systemization and organization infiltrated various quarters of American culture during the twentieth century suggests a comprehensive cultural embrace of technocracy.[5] This fact, as I have argued, can help us understand the ideological connections that existed between the phenomena of Taylorism and management progressivism on the one hand, and the rise of mechanism and reductionism in progressive era and Interwar social science on the other.

By the end of the 1940s Skinner had rejected democracy as an inefficient method of social control. He had embraced, however, the scientific hegemony of psychology, specifically operant behaviorism, in explaining all human phenomena. Based on his animal studies of operant behaviorism in the 1930s, Skinner had gone on in the 1940s to conclude that they could be applied directly to the management of human social systems. The rest of the social sciences, traditional government, and politics, Skinner felt, were not needed for the creation of a true and pure science of society. Skinner moved quickly in the immediate postwar years to publicly extol the virtues of human behavioral design and engineering. His technological tinkering with baby tenders, his utopian thought experiments, his commentary on the scientific merits of different political ideologies, and his attempts to revolutionize education theory all reflected an approach to human resource management highly reminiscent of technocratic management progressivism.

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[5] See Martha Banta, *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Like management progressives and later generations of management scientists and technocrats, Skinner embraced the direct control of society by social engineers.

In his missile research of the 1940s, Skinner's success at designing complicated behavioral profiles in pigeons encouraged him to begin thinking about organisms as experimental devices. This carried over into his subsequent experiments with human behavioral modification in designing and implementing the Air Crib. In attempting to market the Crib to parents as an efficient convenience technology, Skinner also entered the ongoing debate in American scientific and intellectual circles over the merits of cooperative versus competitive character traits in human society. Skinner sought to remove much of the theoretical and interdisciplinary complexity of these considerations with the use of behavioral technologies that straightforwardly addressed these traits in terms of environmental contingencies. Modify the environment of the organism correctly in child rearing, he claimed, and the desired cooperative and competitive behaviors would ensue. For Skinner, the rules of complex, large-scale social management also flowed directly from experimentation with rats, pigeons, and human babies. His critique of American democracy in the 1940s and 50s was inspired by what he had learned in the laboratory. Skinner entered other ongoing debates concerning the merits of democracy as a system of social management with the same confidence in the universality of operant behaviorism.

Depression, war, and an unstable political and economic climate in the immediate postwar years left many political scientists, intellectuals and social critics feeling uncertain about the ability of American democracy to compete with communism on the world stage. The atmosphere of the Cold War brought these cultural insecurities into

even sharper focus. The air of political conservatism in the early 1950s, however, did not deter Skinner from publicly exploring the scientific merits of democracy. Archival evidence suggests that Skinner compared the behavioral efficiency of different forms of social, religious, and political control in Western history in thought experiments of his own design. Skinner compared theocracy, democracy, communism, socialism, and fascism on the basis of their efficacy in exerting social control. Most of these systems, he concluded, employed inefficient and coercive methods. Political philosophies and most methods of unscientific social management, it seemed to Skinner, were not grounded in direct experimental analysis. Skinner's emphasis on properly designed systems of behavioral control left representative democracy looking rather obsolete in procuring social and economic stability. Proper administration of the polity, according to Skinner, required direct scientific management.

Skinner thought that he had conjured up a solution to the problems of social management in the behavioral utopia of *Walden Two* (1946). In this particular thought experiment Skinner carefully mapped out a blueprint for social harmony on a small scale, one that he felt could become the model for a genuine science of culture. Inspired by what he and other social scientists had hoped would be a golden era of social experimentation after the war, Skinner enthusiastically worked out solutions to the various problems associated with social dislocation in the pages of *Walden Two*.

Utopian experiments, as has been noted, have often followed on the heels of industrial expansion and social change in nineteenth-century America. Real-world experimental communities were launched in response to the breakup of communities and a feeling of individual isolation amidst a vast, impersonal urban machine. In *Walden Two*

Skinner pondered how such stresses on families and individuals might be alleviated under the aegis of behavioral social engineering. Skinner tackled the problems of child rearing, and changes in gender roles, contemporary social mores, and family structure in postwar American culture by envisioning a society wherein community functions were methodically and collectively addressed through behavioral science and the control of trained managers. In the decades after writing *Walden Two*, Skinner entertained serious inquiries by private groups and government agencies into constructing actual communities for research. Although Skinner never became directly involved in any of these projects, he often expressed his feeling that his thought experiment in *Walden Two* could inform the re-design of contemporary bureaucratic social management infrastructure and place it on a more solid scientific footing.

In Skinner's subsequent treatises on human behavior such as *Science and Human Behavior* (1953), Skinner argued that the sustainability of modern technocracy also entailed a fundamental reassessment of the self. A science of culture, according to Skinner, could only succeed if human nature was assumed to be lawful and capable of being engineered to technocratic specifications. This view of humanity, he felt, stood in stark contrast to what he described as the Western myth of human autonomy and freedom. In Skinner's view, the behavioral self contained no mind, no inner world of causation. The central aim of social engineering would be to address only those parts of individual behavior that could be controlled effectively through direct manipulation. Culture and humanity for Skinner were devices/machines -- matters of contingency and reinforcement. Traditional concepts of human dignity and freedom, he would later claim

in his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), had to be expunged if the human race was to survive.

Skinner would have agreed with Mead that social science and American culture needed to change together. For Skinner, however, their combination would entail a vastly different approach to enhancing human potentiality. What Mead and Skinner did share was a faith in the adaptive, social-evolutionary potential of humanity and society, and a desire to craft technologies and strategies of social adaptation that would appeal to professional social administrators and the American public.

Scientists as Popularizers: Gathering Public Recognition and Social Authority

Steven Shapin, Paul Forman, and sociologist of science Thomas Gieryn have observed that, in the "cultural geography" of science, the boundaries delimiting the privileged space of science in culture are constantly redrawn. The construction of boundaries is not controlled exclusively by scientists but more often by those outside of elite science that draw upon its epistemic and cognitive authority for political and social ends.[6] The maintenance of these boundary lines often is tied to rhetoric, terminology, and methods of public presentation. As Gieryn asserts, such phenomena support the contention that much of science's credibility comes not from science proper, but from its

[6] See the introduction to Gieryn's book, *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), as well as similar reflections in his article "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science From Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 781-95.

intersection with the rest of society. Historical methodology thus should, and increasingly does, reflect this observation.[7]

Skinner and Mead both used various linguistic, rhetorical, ideological, and technological tools to establish their authority as scientific experts cum public intellectuals in the postwar decades. In marketing their social reform philosophies and technologies of social engineering to the American public, Skinner and Mead helped tear down some of the disciplinary borders separating academic psychology and anthropology from their emerging public audiences. Skinner and Mead, in fact, fall into the category of

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[7] Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries*, 15, 21.

Anne Secord, for example, has employed techniques in anthropology and sociology to study the history of nineteenth-century Lancashire botanical societies and the phenomenon of "artisan" botany among the expanding British middle class. Her study highlights the negotiation processes between professionals and lay enthusiasts in botany that were necessary to manage their interaction. This included negotiations regarding access to "boundary objects" (plants for study), as well as the social spaces (i. e., the public meeting houses where botanical clubs met with professional botanists), where conceptual translation and exchange could take place. Secord points to the "multiplicity of translations" among the networks of professional and "gentleman botanists" that gave meaning and practical utility to the objects of study, and to botanical concepts. See Anne Secord, "Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire," *History of Science* 32 (1994): 269-315. See also Adrian Desmond's study of nineteenth-century transmutation theory and its political translation by working class radicals in his article, "Richard Owen's Reaction to Transmutation in the 1830s," *British Journal for the History of Science* 18 (1985): 25-50 and Roger Cooter's study of the popularization of phrenology in *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in 19th Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

This dynamic of translation, exchange, and transformation also applies to the terminology of science. Roger Smith's study of the concept of "inhibition" in nineteenth-century history of psychology, for example, illustrates how the evolution of scientific terminology can be used as a historical venue for exploring the scientific and popular meanings in shared language. The evolution of modern experimental psychology and physiology, as Smith notes, lay not in the prescriptive philosophical and ideological declarations made by scientists, but in the actual use of terminology in both scientific and popular contexts. See Roger Smith, *Inhibition: History and Meaning in the Sciences of Mind and Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Smith's work confirms Paul Forman's claim that meaning in scientific terminology is neither singular nor transcendent. Its use by many communities in and out of professional science entailed a collection of various meanings that were combined in different arrangements to suit specific demands. Conversely, as Richard Yeo has observed, changes in the traditional intellectual authority of British science in the first half of the nineteenth century reflected the profound influence of broad cultural trends such as industrialization and the expansion of the middle class, on professional boundaries and theories in science. The gap between institutionalized professional science and mainstream society was narrowed irreversibly in the nineteenth century by the confluence of science, theology, and culture, for example, in controversies over the scientific merits of phrenology, the political dimensions of Chamber's *Vestiges*, and various aspects of Darwinian evolution. See Richard Yeo, "Science and Intellectual Authority in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Britain: Robert Chambers and *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*," *Victorian Studies* 28 (1984): 5-31.

"cultural amphibians," a designation that historian Michael MacDonald has used in his history of juridical authority in the Early Modern period, to denote individuals who migrate between the realm of professional élites and that of everyday culture.[8] As translators of social science to the public, Mead and Skinner both made their wares 'user-friendly,' by connecting them to the postwar experiences of average Americans through a shared set of concepts, physical objects, terminology. In this endeavor they were not alone. Technological revolutions and the centrality of science in national and military policy in the twentieth-century postwar period placed science squarely in the center of American culture as never before. Among other such denizens of social science as Benjamin Spock and Talcott Parsons in the 1940s and 50s, there was a concerted effort to associate scientific research on the family and child rearing with social dislocation in the 1940s. William Graebner has observed, for example, that Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946) was intentionally designed to play upon public fears of social disintegration. As with Skinner and Mead, Spock's assessment of American cultural integrity stressed the potentially disastrous effects of improper child rearing that might have contributed in the past to war, economic collapse, and experiments with fascism.[9]

Many social scientists in Spock's professional circle, one that included Mead, had worked together on researching the issue of human aggression in the 1930s.[10] Drawing upon the debate over its possible connection to large-scale social problems (problems that

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[8] I draw this observation from comments about MacDonald in Cooter and Pumphrey, "Separate Spheres," 251. See MacDonald's original article, "The Secularization of Suicide," *Past and Present* 111 (1986): 50-100.

[9] William Graebner, *The Engineering of Consent: Democracy and Authority in 20th Century America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 127.

were also related to cooperation and competition in human nature), Spock portrayed the child as having inherently aggressive tendencies. If left unchecked, he claimed, they would result in violent behavior later in life. Collectively, these lapses in parenting could then contribute to a national culture of aggression. Problems with even the most mundane of childhood activities such as toilet training could, Spock alleged, later bring on feelings of insecurity and frustration in adulthood. Spock, like Skinner and Mead, crafted his scientific rhetoric specifically to address public anxieties, thereby engaging public demand for techniques of social adjustment that would stave off this alleged crisis. This is not to say that they callously exploited or manipulated American fears about parenting, but that they were evangelical promoters of applied social science who took the opportunity to market their wares.

Having learned valuable lessons about how to associate behavioral technology with convenience and reliability in his missile experiments, Skinner displayed his marketing savvy in reworking the technology of operant behaviorism into consumer products. In translating experimental science into the easy-to-use appliances of the baby tender and the teaching machine, Skinner sent the message that the complexities of parenting and education could be managed and even eliminated. Tapping into a new consumer culture that promised a streamlined, futuristic world of better living through technology in the 1950s, Skinner cultivated the American appetite for efficiency and convenience in managing both the domestic environment and the classroom. Showcased in *Ladies Home Journal*, Skinner's Air Crib device, for example, promised to make the control of the 'anxiety bombs' that children might become as easy as using a one-button machine. Although he had little success in creating a market for this device, Skinner had

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[10] Ibid., 129.

much better luck with teaching machines and the concept of programmed instruction a decade later.

Similarly, in the utopian venue of *Walden Two*, Skinner addressed some of the same social concerns as Spock had in his baby care literature about what to do with the family, the child, and individual adjustment to a changing culture. In the dialogue between representatives of science, humanist skeptics, and average Americans, Skinner wove a tale of scientific deliverance around T. E. Frazier, the behavioral mastermind of Walden Two, a character who served as Skinner's mouthpiece. Skinner demonstrated his keen understanding of the American national idiom by using the imagery of the nineteenth-century pioneer and utopian past, -- of small, integrated communities that had re-created social integration and harmony from the ground up. Skinner's was also a community version of a Thoreauvian journey into self-examination. Using these images of past American glory and self-discovery, Skinner engaged a real-world American postwar identity crisis.

Although not as tangible as Skinner's physical technologies, Mead used the concept of national character to manage the complexities of culture. Through scientific rhetoric, she offered American national character to the public as a venue for exploring a commonly held set of distinct personality traits. Mead's social commentary highlighted those aspects of the American self such as independence, industriousness, practicality, and a love of freedom that could contribute to a fully realized democracy. Like Skinner, Mead advocated a clean break with the past, but both also used iconic images of the pioneer to reinvigorate American national resolve. Mead wanted to spur Americans into reviving their national identity in the late 1930s and early 40s using the tools of social

science. For both Mead and Skinner, child rearing and education would increasingly become central to future social reform.

Like Skinner, Mead tried to promote the usefulness and expediency of concepts such as national character to government and military agencies, but she too became frustrated in her attempts to convince them that such scientific wares could make concrete and lasting contributions to wartime social management and postwar policy design. Later, Mead took her broad agenda for cultural analysis, social change and adaptation directly to the American people in books like *Male and Female* and *New Lives for Old* in the 1950s. In *Male and Female*, Mead presented examples of cultural diversity in order to liberate readers from standard models of family, gender, and personality.

As American life began to change in the postwar years, Mead encouraged her audiences to take comfort in the knowledge that this did not signal impending social collapse, but rather an opportunity to expand human potentiality. Mead worked diligently in her many publications, addresses, and interviews to convince Americans that fundamental social change was a good thing and that personal and familial flexibility should be embraced. After all, she observed, it had worked wonders for the Manus tribes in New Guinea. In this instance, Mead blatantly translated her ethnography of social transformation among the Manus tribes into an allegory about American national character and social progress. The lessons of human potential that were learned from the laboratories of primitive culture, she argued, gave Americans a measure of "predictive control" over the future, something that they very much desired.

Although each of them held very different views of self and society, both Skinner and Mead employed the rhetoric of social change and the metaphors of evolutionary

adaptation and potentiality to discuss human nature and social progress. Adaptation and adjustment were central themes in the postwar American experience of changes in patterns of community and family structure, social roles for the sexes, child rearing, work, and education. These themes were also an important part of ongoing revisions to evolutionary theory in the biological and human sciences during this time. Despite a departure from strict environmental determinism in these and other related disciplines, Darwinian evolutionary theory, especially the concepts of natural selection and adaptation, continued to be importance for scientists like Skinner and Mead in constructing scientific theories of the self and in publicly critiquing American postwar democracy and culture.

Skinner and Mead both used the metaphors of adaptation and natural selection to discuss how the social environment in, for example, the family, the school, and the primitive island society, shaped individual character and behavior. The main difference between their views on adaptive human potential concerned the expression of individual human will in culture. Mead's cultural anthropology celebrated the diversity of human potentiality and culture, while Skinner's operant psychology was focused squarely on the effects of the immediate environment on isolated human behaviors. Unlike Mead's, Skinner's views of the self rendered irrelevant the consideration of mentality, individual agency, culture, and human history in engineering future society.

For Mead, the holist, the potential for change in human nature was made that much more expansive by the presence in each person of agency, or the individual capacity for active change to social conditions. Cultures certainly shaped the character of individuals; this was evident from Mead's comparative study of primitive cultures. But

in a modern American democratic culture, self-knowledge, an awareness of social change, and an understanding of the creative diversity of humanity (made possible through *interdisciplinary* social science), Mead believed, liberated the individual to play a more *active* role in defining the self in society. In Skinner's mechanistic view of the self, however, humanity did not act, but was *acted upon* by the social environment; the self was literally no more than behavior and environment, and it did not entail mind, will, or autonomy. Compared to Mead's view, Skinnerian social theory lessened human adaptive potential, since the parameters of potentiality were limited by the immediate contingencies of the environment and by the agendas of behavioral engineers and planners. This sense of the Skinnerian self was enhanced in popular discourse by an emphasis on the active manipulation of subjects in precisely controlled laboratory settings. It was epitomized in the technologies of the Air Crib and the teaching machine. Mead's notion of the laboratories of primitive culture, however, evoked the image of the scientist as a naturalist in the field, someone (much like Darwin) who observed and described patterns of change to find regularities amidst diversity, but did not actively manipulate and control the environment in doing so.

In the 1950s Mead and Skinner successfully launched their public careers, and each of them enjoyed a wide readership in the popular press. Magazine articles recounted their many pronouncements on better living through social science. They both had successfully tapped into contemporary culture. Mead was already famous for her exotic accounts of primitive cultures in her 1930s 'travel literature.' Her audience thus was primed by the end of the 1930s for her reflections on world war and various social issues that she had begun to relate to the study of cultural anthropology. Skinner's

journey into the limelight in the 1940s, however, was from relative anonymity. Although he had established his academic and scientific reputation in the 1930s with his book *The Behavior of Organisms* (1937), he as yet had no public notoriety. During the late 1940s, however, he did begin to enjoy the social prestige that came with his Harvard professorate. The high profile of Harvard University in America was a gateway for many of its faculty into the public limelight. Harvard scientists and intellectuals often were called upon to comment on current events and controversies of the day. Skinner took full advantage of this in showcasing his entertaining experiments with pigeons that were trained to play piano and ping-pong. Such scientific novelties made for good copy in popular magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. They also provided Skinner with some of the first important forums for his social theories. Even in these early science news stories he began to draw connections for readers between pigeons, human behavior, and the engineering potential of Skinnerian behaviorism (i. e., his thoughts on programming organisms for cooperation/competition).

Mead's and Skinner's commentaries on contemporary life, and their extended look at American culture in the 1950s, afforded them the kind of public recognition that few other social scientists ever enjoyed. The period of cultural crisis in the 1960s amidst a new war in Vietnam, concerns over atomic energy and the Bomb, the environment, the counter-culture rejection of mainstream culture, and the expanding feminist and civil rights movements that had begun in the 1950s gave Skinner and Mead still more opportunities to tap into new public constituencies and build their status in American society.

In the late 1950s and early 60s Skinner found ripe opportunities in the area of education to expand his reputation as a public intellectual. In what was perceived at the time as a Cold War era crisis in American education, new concerns over the obsolescence and inefficiency of schools in producing scientists became another dimension of the 'space' and 'culture' races. Skinner deployed his teaching machine inventions and his popular treatise *The Technology of Teaching* (1958) and sparked what is still regarded in education circles as a global revolution in programmed instruction. Interest in programmed instruction was especially strong among the ranks of public education administrators, as well as corporations looking to invest in profitable education markets.

With the growing demand for faster techniques of teaching and learning in the late 1950s, Skinner single-handedly retooled progressive education theory to reflect the rubric of the programmable self. Skinner claimed that, like everything else in human nature, learning was a simple matter of behavior patterns; it had nothing to do with mind or cognition. And as with any problem in operant behaviorism, it was the study of the environment of the organism that counted. In this case, teaching and the classroom were the foci of inquiry. Similar to Mead's idea of a laboratory of primitive culture, Skinner portrayed the classroom as a laboratory for diagnosing and solving learning inefficiencies, and for solving the related social problems of crime, poverty, and racism. Skinner masterfully invoked the added image of the factory and mass production, and the convenience of fast and easy 'appliances' for learning and social adjustment. With the technology of programmed instruction, one could say that Skinner 'Taylorized' American behavioral psychology and education theory to fit public demand.

In addition to these successes, Skinner's *Walden Two* also experienced something of a rebirth in the 1960s. Young counterculture activists who were looking for a way out of alienating technocracy looked to Skinner's utopia and other social alternatives for inspiration. Interestingly, in some corridors of the counterculture Skinner's book was interpreted as a humanist tract, and its descriptions of harmonious and interconnected, person-centered living struck a chord. Instead of the dehumanizing and mechanistic dystopia that humanist critics saw in the 1950s, a new generation of Americans appropriated *Walden Two* as a vision of non-manipulative social harmony set in the green, simple, and natural setting of the countryside, away from urban sprawl. In the early 1960s Skinner actively cultivated this re-interpretation in a new introduction to the book where he presented himself as an ally in the counterculture movement and a fellow resistor against the status quo.

The 1960s also saw a bona fide publicity coup for Margaret Mead whose global celebrity marked her off in the press as a veritable cultural "phenomenon" unto herself, and as a matriarch of social reform and counter-culture politics. Part of the reason for Mead's universal appeal, as I have argued, is the care that she took to steer clear of too close an association with any one political constituency. This was necessary in order to preserve her aura of scientific authority and her new role as an expert commentator on a wide range of contemporary issues.

Indeed, Mead's status as a "color commentator" on America made her the embodiment of professional anthropology. She helped redefine and politicize the discipline in the popular press and on college campuses in the 1960s as the premiere science of social "adaptation." As young students and feminists began to look to

anthropology for insights into self-identity, they turned to Mead as someone intimately familiar with human potential and cultural diversity. Her legacy of liberal-progressivism also marked her off as scientist who was sympathetic to the various protest movements. Mead had influenced a generation of young people, especially women, who increasingly came to see anthropology as a forum for self-discovery and liberation.

Modern Human Nature: Pathways of Appropriation in Postwar American Culture

Using their knowledge of reform ideology and American culture in crafting and marketing visions of the self, both Skinner and Mead independently captured public attention. As I have argued, they mixed scientific research with non-scientific social issues and crossed the boundaries of professional science into the mainstream. Each of them tapped into American anxieties about the fate of the individual and the survival of democracy and society. Their scientific messages about the fate of the self and the relationship between social science and society, however, were not "disseminated" intact into the culture, but were modified by different groups in postwar American society according to specific social and political agendas.

In turning from the discussion of strategies of popularization to the question of how messages about the self were actually received in American postwar society, I invoke Roger Chartier's assertion that a genuine account of the "public" in historical scholarship must focus attention on those very communities that appropriate and use scientific and intellectual wares.[11] It is now acknowledged in cultural historiography that

[11] See Roger Chartier, "Culture As Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Steven L.

fixed categories and typologies of audience do not exist. Examining the social relations between communities of scientists and those outside of science is essential in determining how public appropriation takes place in particular contexts.[12]

Lawrence Levine and Morag Shiach have observed, for example, that the examination of past-neglected groups, e. g., minorities, women, immigrants, and the rural poor, among many others, has challenged traditional historical assumptions about who the members of a culture were and what their experience of it was like.[13] Historians must discover for themselves what categories to use in describing the various groups, political

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Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), 229-54; *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

The "new historiography" in American cultural history and American studies that emerged during the 1970s and 80s came as a consequence, as Lawrence Levine and other cultural historians have observed, of novel approaches to the history of modern America beginning in the 1960s. Orthodox histories of nation-states, it was claimed, relied heavily on a smaller set of well-worn and unexplored social categories. A new generation of historians sought to replace such synthetic concepts as the "American experience" and "national character" with detailed depictions of what was indeed a far more heterogeneous, diverse, and multi-layered social landscape. See Lawrence W. Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-5. Similar retrospectives on these developments in social and cultural history include George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) and Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

[12] Cooter and Pumphrey, "Separate Spheres," 239. Cooter and Pumphrey have cited Roger Chartier as a major influence in this regard.

Historians of science, most of whom, as Cooter and Pumphrey have observed, are untrained in social and cultural history, have, nevertheless, begun in recent years to acknowledge the work of cultural historians with regard to the articulation of cultures and publics. They have begun to explain how audiences take ownership of scientific concepts, appropriating and transforming them for use in connection with nonscientific philosophies and political agendas. A particularly illustrative case of popular appropriation and transformation that went far beyond the "boundaries" of the scientific community is the widespread popularity of phrenology in the first half of the nineteenth century in British society. Roger Cooter has provided an illuminating account of how debates between Franz Joseph Gall, professional anatomists, and physiologists blossomed into a popular exploration of the place of humanity in civilization and the natural world. See Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in 19th Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Similarly, Greg Myers has tracked the public appropriation of nineteenth-century thermodynamics where concepts of conservation and entropy were used by all manner of social critics including Henry Adams and Joseph Carlyle to discuss socioeconomic and political theory. See Greg Myers, "Nineteenth-Century Popularizations of Thermodynamics and the Rhetoric of Social Prophesy," *Victorian Studies* 29 (1985): 57-67.

[13] Levine, *The Unpredictable Past*, 6-7; Morag Shiach, *Discourse On Popular Culture: Class Gender and History in Cultural Analysis, 1730 to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 12-13.

agendas, and social hierarchies that make up a local cultural context. There are no fixed or universal categories, but only those that arise in examining what Roger Chartier has described as the many pathways of public *appropriation*. By analyzing the processes of public appropriation and conceptual transformation of scientific concepts among different groups in the American public, the historian of science can begin to understand how, for example, the public use of holistic and mechanistic visions of the self actually evolved.[14] Over the course of the postwar decades, parents, women, humanist critics, educators, and young people in the counterculture modified and selectively deployed Skinnerian and Meadian social science for a variety of different political purposes. The particular pathways of these appropriations are worth reviewing.

Part of the reason Skinner's theories and technologies were controversial was that his approach to human nature brought into focus an American technocracy that many in the public understood already existed. His thoughts on behavioral engineering forced his humanist critics, for example, to confront a society that was already engineered to a considerable extent. Skinner had merely advocated formalizing the extant technocratic controls already in place using experimental behavioral analysis. It is in the context of his powerful explications concerning the fundamental tension between mechanistic and holistic images of the self in America culture that we must evaluate his reception among several distinct publics.

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[14] Roger Chartier, "Culture As Appropriation," 229-35, 237, 252.

In studying public opinion through the analytical lens of rhetoric, the cultural historian Gerard Hauser has noted that idea of the 'the public' has similarly become an abstraction rather than a clear description of real people. As historians began to recognize the diversity of the American cultural mélange, the study of the many publics that it entailed also got underway. See Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), especially pages 276-77.

In the case of the baby tender, Skinner assented to a message in the helping professions for tight, yet non-aversive, controls on child rearing. He took this call to an experimental extreme, however, with a device that promised parents well-adjusted, healthy babies. But in the few attempts he made to market it, consumers made clear their feeling that the tender connoted very negative and dehumanizing images of the self. The Air Crib epitomized all that was impersonal and sterile about laboratory science. It smacked of science run amok.

Such was the case with the initial reception of *Walden Two*. Skinner seemed to have vastly underestimated the immediate postwar anxieties of Americans over political and economic instability. This was also indicated later on in such social phenomena as McCarthyism. As Americans rushed to rebuild the economy after the war, they were less inclined toward suggestions of radical social experimentation, especially when they smacked of the same scientific totalitarianism and dystopia portrayed in Orwell's *1984* (1949) and Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and the real-world social experiments in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. Again, despite Skinner's repeated insistence that *Walden Two* was no such model, his readers thought otherwise.

Others in Skinner's audience came from the ranks of the 1950s education industry and from public school administrators. Administrators, teachers, and a growing community of manufacturers in education technology found Skinner's teaching devices more palatable than the foreboding vision of mechanized humanity that many thought was embedded in the Air Crib and *Walden Two*. The selective appropriation of learning technologies by educators and businesspeople did not involve as many of the same philosophical worries about mechanized humankind that parents had encountered in

considering the Air Crib. Although his humanist critics again accused Skinner of legitimating the programmable self in teaching technology, education consumers were attracted to the practicality and seeming efficiency of programmed instruction. Educators did, however, also pick up on the reform implications of teaching machines and Skinner's association of them with liberal-progressive education theory. Education journals and industry literature often reflected an enthusiasm for the international potential of programmed instruction to help children with special needs, to raise minorities out of poverty, to revolutionize traditional notions of intelligence, and to help reform criminals. Skinner used these reform connotations in teaching technology to his advantage in aligning himself with the politics of social reform in the 1960s.

In Mead's case, one of her most important audiences was young American women. During the 1950s and 60s Mead examined their new and often combined roles as mothers, students, and feminists in her published work. Micaela di Leonardo has observed that Mead's depictions of primitive women in *Male and Female* and other works, while celebrating human malleability, also subtly assented to mainstream social conventions about women's exclusively domestic family roles.[15] It seemed to some contemporary and later-generation feminists that Mead actually cautioned women against going to far astray from their traditional roles so as not to undermine their self-images. Seemingly in response to this criticism by those like Betty Friedan, Mead later changed her message about female potential to appeal to a growing feminist contingent.

Betty Friedan's critique of Mead's anthropology in her book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1958), had laid bare what she felt was Mead's embrace of the traditional

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[15] Micaela di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

domestic ideal of women in the 1950s and her betrayal of the feminist cause. Friedan claimed that, like Talcott Parsons, Mead had eschewed the issue of gender prejudice in her book, *Male and Female* (1953), with subtle messages about how women might risk destroying themselves by modifying their domestic nature too much in an environment still hostile to their exploration of things beyond the domestic sphere. In this instance Friedan cautioned young women against an uncritical acceptance of Mead's scientific authority, and that of other humanists in social science. Friedan felt that Mead, Parsons, and others were manipulating women and using scientific authority to increase book sales rather than to liberate women from culturally imposed limitations on their roles in society. Mead, Friedan claimed, had started out in her published work of the 1930s with a message of female liberation, withdrawn it in the 1950s, only to reinvigorate it yet again in the 1960s. These accusations, however, must be interpreted in light of Friedan's own aggressive agenda for feminism in the late 1950s, and that of her feminist inheritors later on. What is clear from the historical record is that Mead disassociated herself from most feminist politics, agenda that she often described as petty and counterproductive in the cause for gender equity. Mead took a similar stance against the civil rights politics of those like James Baldwin. Mead's image management one these scores indicate her unwillingness to jeopardize the inroads that she and her colleagues had made into mainstream media and government circles. Mead was thus always careful not to align herself too closely with social radicalism.

Both Mead and Skinner found enthusiasm for their social theories among the young. The previous generation of Americans, they felt, had lived through the Depression and the Second World War, and their receptiveness to fundamental social

change was often cautious if not wholly negative. A new generation of Americans in the 1960s, however, was not saddled with the memory of hard times. Skinner and Mead had always emphasized the centrality of children and young people in their work. Mead's celebration of the young in this regard, and her public embrace of their voices and concerns for social change contributed to her growing image in the 1960s and early 70s a their mother-spokesperson. In turn, her anthropology of human potential and diversity was strongly associated with the emerging student culture of self-discovery on college campuses. As fellow anthropologists such as Sol Tax noted at the time, Mead was responsible for creating a thriving public demand for such anthropology. As a result, anthropology and social science professors were under increasing pressure to make their courses relevant to the emerging reform politics concerning racism, war, feminism, poverty, and environmental pollution, among other topics. In appropriating Mead, young people created a gospel of self-actualization. A similar message of personal fulfillment became part of the counterculture interpretation of Skinner's views on social alternatives. Many young people saw his call for a return to a simpler and more carefully planned, social existence in *Walden Two* as proof of his ultimately humanistic view of self and society.

Finally, in recalling how Mead and Skinner each used the rhetoric of change and the metaphors of human adaptation and potentiality to discuss mechanistic and holist (passive and active) images of the self in society, it is important to note that their images as scientists were also interpreted by the public along gender lines. As previously noted in this study, the juxtaposition of Skinner and Mead as icons of science in the 1960s and 70s presents the historian of science with the opportunity to examine how contemporary

conventional notions of male and female character in modern America have played a role in defining methodological, philosophical, and political perspectives in social science. Skinner, in his emphasis on precision and control of behavior in the isolated laboratory setting, was the picture of the enigmatic male scientist, a calculating and detached 'godless brain,' supremely rational, but also socially less connected. Mead, much like the environmentalist, Rachel Carson, in the 1960s actively cultivated the mother-oriented persona of a culturally connected and politically conscientious scientist who was in touch with the rhythms of nature and humanity. Whereas Skinner's approach to the passive self represented for many the dehumanizing effects of scientific objectivity and unchecked technocracy, Mead's anthropology of active individual liberation and self-actualization, and her popular image as a feminist, mother, and cultural caretaker, epitomized the naturalist's approach to scientific inquiry and a healthy respect for human beings as unique in their creativity and potential. One possible line of future inquiry in the present study thus might address the many connections that exist between the politics of gender and the development of postwar social science, and also between gendered images of science and the ethics of social management and engineering in American popular culture that have been partially explored herein.

The Janus Faces of the Self: Reflections on the History of Human Nature in Modern America

As many philosophers and historians have argued, there were several scientific revelations and social transformations in the nineteenth century that significantly altered traditional concepts of the self. Scholars such as Charles Taylor and Roy Porter have

noted the role of industrialization and machine culture, the rise of evolutionary theory, social class stratification, and the concomitant changes in family and community structure associated with the rural to urban transition, as contributing factors in the scientific and philosophical departure from the idea of an autonomous self.[16] Even as the founders of psychology such as James and Freud negotiated theoretical space for a revised scientific image of self in the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was a growing awareness of the self as an entity intimately intertwined with its urban surroundings. The self was a product of the social and industrial environment.[17]

Charles Taylor has discussed the expression of this transition in nineteenth-century art and literature, especially with regard to the Romantic rejection of society as a machine and its diminishing effects on human dignity. Wordsworth, the German Romantics, Coleridge, Blake, and Shelley, for example, each attempted to reinvigorate the subjective image of the self by celebrating its connection to the powers of nature. Industrial modernism, however, had facilitated a phenomenological turn away from nature. In response, those like Henri Bergson, William James, and the Gestaltists began to explore the depths of the inner self. In this search for new sources of subjectivity and meaning, they defended the claim that humanity and human experience were not reducible to environmental conditions and biochemical parts.

The nineteenth-century decline of the "unitary" self did, however, open up the possibility for multiple definitions of humanity. The self at the dawn of the twentieth century was understood not as a static entity, but a process of development, an ongoing

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[16] See *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

evolution, a "flow of experience" still open to a redefinition of subjectivity. This was expressed in, among other things, the "epiphanic" art and poetry of Ezra Pound. Still, as Taylor notes, a twentieth-century immersion in scientific instrumentalism and a mechanistic worldview in science and social discourse has problematized the sentimental search for the subjective self in nature and the inner life of perception and cognition. The face and place of the self in the modern age has been challenged on many fronts.

In the present study I have discussed the scientific and public careers of two highly prominent social scientists in order to explore the effects of broad twentieth-century social and cultural trends on the production, and subsequent public appropriation, of scientific visions of the self. I have noted the influence that industrialization, economic depression, world war, and various social reform movements have had on the institutional, methodological, and political approaches to the self in social science. I have also noted the profound influence on these visions of philosophies of scientific social management that were pervasive in American culture. Ours is a culture that has embraced technology, science, and system building in the pursuit of individual transcendence and social harmony.

As we have seen, this pursuit has been opposed by those who warn of burgeoning technocracy and the complete dissolution of human meaning. While the politics of social reform during the progressive era, the Interwar period, and the postwar counterculture, did not achieve the radical social countermeasures that many had hoped for, these movements unquestionably shaped the professional organization of social science and scientific approaches to the self. The social sciences embraced the behavioral and environmental approach to the self at the beginning of the century because it promised a

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[17] Porter, *Rewriting the Self*, 11-12.

greater measure of control over human nature. As I have shown, however, philosophies of social engineering in the social sciences took on different and contrasting forms, with some scientists advocating technocracy, and others supporting a meliorative approach to social management. My exploration of the varied reform initiatives that emerged in the opening decades of the twentieth century shows how visions of the self have been applied to both technocratic and liberal-democratic visions of society.

The scientific definition of mechanistic and holistic depictions of the self also had important implications for how the American government, industry, and different sectors of the public would implement the concepts and technologies of social science. Indeed, as I have argued herein, the dynamic of appropriation between science and culture in this regard has been reciprocal, intermixing scientific and social meanings and practices in the process of generating techniques for managing the self and society. This was especially the case during the postwar era when scientific experts-turned-public intellectuals took advantage of fundamental changes in family, community, and work. The areas of child rearing and education were particularly important venues for Mead and Skinner in expanding their public authority and marketing their scientific wares.

To reiterate, my purpose in the present study has involved two main objectives. First, I have attempted to explore the public careers of Mead and Skinner in a way that moves beyond their iconic status in disciplinary history. I concentrate instead on their roles as participants in, and expressions of, American culture in the twentieth century, especially the post-World War Two era. Secondly, I have examined the popular appropriation of Skinner and Mead, as well as their social technologies, strategies of adjustment, and theories of social management, as venues for exploring the public

discourse on the self in postwar American culture. Using these two historiographic foci, my analysis provides, for example, a fuller understanding of how such phenomena as Taylorism, management progressivism, social melioration, and other strains of progressive era social reform influenced the scientific training and research methodologies of Skinner and Mead. I also provide insight into the unique rhetorical and technological strategies that Skinner and Mead used in transforming their scientific visions of the self into platforms for social criticism and public discourse during the Interwar and postwar decades. In turn, I have described in further detail some of the specific ways in which different groups of Americans have appropriated and used these images of the self in adjusting to modern American life. My study thus contributes new insights into the cultural history of the self in modern America.

Given my juxtaposition of these two prominent scientists whose approaches to human nature (mechanistic and holistic) stood in stark contrast to one another, one might ask for my historical judgment about which vision of the self was predominant, or, rather, which vision 'won out' in the late twentieth century. I do not believe that history provides a definitive answer to this question. Neither image was embraced exclusively; we do not live in either a humanist or technocratic utopia, or anything close to them. My research does indicate that both visions of the self were put to work in American culture at different times, for different reasons, depending on context, i. e., on what type of understanding or control over human nature was sought. As I have demonstrated, there were, for example, circumstances in which a particular community of Americans used one vision of the self exclusively to promote personal, political, and business agendas. At other times, Americans combined both visions of the self in a curious and tentative

(non-rational) embrace, one that reflected their commitments to technology and technocracy, as well as to the search for personal meaning and self-fulfillment in a changing culture. In my view, postwar American culture reflects a general awareness that both visions were necessary in balancing the individual's desire for subjective meaning with the organizational demands of living in a complex urban environment.

My analysis draws from the work of other scholars who have proposed a general historiography of the self, one that I have invoked in my particular study of Mead and Skinner. As Philip Cushman and Nikolas Rose have observed, the predominantly social constructionist view of the self in psychology is context-driven.[18] It is defined not only by the evolution of technology and the urban complex but also by a number of new analytical criteria in the modern era that have differentiated the self according to class, gender, ethnicity, and age, among other things.[19] Since there is no longer a universal or unitary definition of self in either the social sciences or modern society, the historiography of the self, Rose argues, must look to the *social practices* in each culture for definitions and descriptions.[20] This strategy, or what Rose has described as tracing the "genealogy" or "topography of subjectification" to reveal the new "regulatory ideal of the self" in modern culture, involves a number of different historical projects.[21] These include the study of professional and institutional practices in science and society, the motivations of individual social scientists, the teleological foundations of models of the

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[18] See Philip Cushman, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995); Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[19] Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*, 5.

[20] Ibid., 25.

[21] Ibid., 23.

self, the construction of 'expert' social authority, the social practices of public(s), and the structure of the state.[22] Rose's historiography stands in contrast to that of Charles Taylor who discusses the intellectual history of the self in terms of philosophical, literary, and artistic theory.

A Rose has observed, we mediate the complexity of mass society by invoking autonomy and dignity when defining our individual and national identity. Our ethics and values are also discussed in these terms. Yet this view of the self is only one among many that have been used in negotiating modern American culture.[23] The self is defined differently, for example, when discussed in religious, medical, economic, domestic, and military/industrial contexts.[24] Fractionation of the self, as Rose observes, has also occurred with the rise of system theory and cybernetics. Its definition has been relativized through the study of psychology and anthropology. Feminists have observed that the self has been unfairly skewed toward patriarchy and a male-dominated image. Psychological study of the unconscious mind has challenged subjectivity. And deconstructionism has threatened to undermine subjectivity and self-identity altogether.[25]

This is all to say, Rose argues, that both the subjectification and deconstruction of the self in these various contexts has a history in the actual social practices of science, the law, the family, industry, the military, and everyday culture.[26] Our technologies and

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[22] Ibid., 23-33.

[23] Ibid., 1-5.

[24] I should note here that Rose briefly notes these as examples in his book, a work mainly devoted to historiography and its utility in liberal democratic social theory.

[25] Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*, 5-9.

[26] Ibid., 25.

social architecture, as well as our scientific and civic institutions, reflect this history. It is apparent in the way that social authority among experts and managers gets established through the construction and marketing of scientific knowledge products. In the case of psychology, as Rose observes, there is often parity between professional scientific epistemology and social convention.[27] The "techne" of modern psychology moreover has given way to, among other things, the reification of the calculable/quantified self, the management philosophies used to organize public spaces in factories and schools, an ethic for social administration that has shaped public values, and a host of personal organization practices.[28]

What the historian thus should study in these various contexts, according to Rose, is the way in which real-world strategies, what Foucault called the "technologies of the self," came into existence for *practical* use in self-management and social organization.[29] In the modern era, multiple definitions of the self have been combined and used in myriad ways to balance individual needs with the demands of the 'system.' It is up to the historian to ask, as Rose notes, "[i]n what ways was this regime of the self put together, under what conditions and in relation to what demands and forms of authority?"[30]

In the present study, I have engaged many of the same analytical categories recommended by Rose and others in tracing the relationships between institutional social

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[27] Ibid., 61.

[28] Ibid., 88-90.

[29] Ibid., 29. Rose cites Foucault's coining of this phrase here. I should note that I have used similar language throughout my study to describe the strategies and technologies promulgated by Skinner and Mead in the postwar decades. This was done entirely independently. My use of this and any other similar terminology is entirely coincidental. I acknowledge Rose' and Foucault's priority in these instances.

[30] Ibid., 33.

science, the careers of prominent social scientists, and the history of American culture in the twentieth century. There are, however, some key distinctions between Rose's delineation of the historiography of the self and my own use of it in the cases of Mead and Skinner. First, I should point out that Rose is not the first to advocate the use of these historical criteria in doing the cultural history of science. The cultural history of science increasingly reflects an awareness of the interrelations between government, institutional science, scientific authority and expertise, individual scientists, and science's public audiences. Historians have discussed, in turn, how these dynamics have shaped the production, transmission, and appropriation of scientific concepts, terminology, and, in this case, visions of human nature.

Secondly, although I share Rose's emphasis on researching the "techne" of science and its real-world use in social practice, my project is not meant, as is his, to argue for a liberal-democratic revisionist history of social science. Rose makes clear in his recommendations for a "genealogy of psychology" that it must resurrect those humanist contributions to social scientific methodology and theory that have been marginalized, illuminating as he says "the parts that orthodoxy considers impure and shameful."[31] This should be done, as he states, "not to denounce but to diagnose, as a necessary preliminary to the prescription of antidotes."[32] As Rose argues, the history of humanist psychology can contribute to the realization of individual human potential by providing those technologies of the self that, "promise to restore the subject to autonomy

[31] Ibid., 80.

[32] Ibid.

and freedom."[33] Rose advocates the merger of market economy with liberal democracy through a social science that provides no less than a psychologically inspired rationale for humanistic government.[34]

My research herein is far less ambitious. My historical investigation into how scientific depictions of the self were incorporated selectively into social administration and public discourse is not meant to advocate either a liberal-democratic or a technocratic vision of future society. My analytical juxtaposition of Skinner and Mead is intended to illuminate impartially the nature of ongoing debates in postwar America about the place and face of the self in modern life. Indeed, one of my central aims has been to explain why Skinner and Mead were catapulted into public celebrity at the same time in the postwar decades despite their having promoted vastly different visions of human nature. I have argued that their public careers, taken together as expressions of American culture, tell us new and important things about the nature of this debate. I have endeavored herein to enumerate these contributions to our historical understanding.

Having said this, I also feel the obligation in closing this discussion to offer my personal appraisal of the self in late twentieth-century American culture. Unfortunately, it appears to me that scientific depictions of the self and the ubiquity of systems theory, cybernetics, bioscience, technology, and technocracy in America increasingly reflect a tendency toward dehumanizing mechanism in our behavioral approach to human nature and social management. The pervasiveness of unchecked capitalism and the rise of a social ethic based on the moral economy of the market adds to this trend. As Christopher

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[33] Ibid., 79, 114-15.

[34] Ibid., 100.

Lasch has noted, we steadily are replacing politics with administration, morality and judgment with measurement, the machine for human labor, human resource production for education, and the market for culture.[35]

I worry, as does Lasch, that the commodification (to use Micaela di Leonardo's term) of American social science and culture, which transforms democracy into consumerism, also renders meaningless the differences between the liberal humanist and reductionist behavioral depictions of self.[36] Since the Second World War, both communities in the social sciences have been co-opted (although not entirely) into the corporate power structure that now dominates American society and polity. As Lasch notes, the difference between present-day humanist and behaviorist theory and coping technologies, both designed merely to survive a dehumanizing system, only differ in "style and emphasis."[37] Technocratic and democratic philosophies of social engineering both contain the same disturbing moral and social implications that point to a departure from "moral responsibility."[38] Moreover, it may not be possible to refute Skinner on the basis of an "environmentalist therapeutic ethic" of self-actualization. Indeed, as Lasch points out, the continued appeal of something resembling Walden Two is that it holds out the prospect of an existence where there is "no need for moral struggle."[39] For a society

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[35] Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1984), 51.

[36] Ibid., 52.

[37] Ibid., 213.

[38] Ibid., 215.

[39] Ibid.

simultaneously in pursuit of control, freedom, and human connection, even if contrived, this is hard for many to resist.[40]

Given this, it does at times appear that liberal-humanist social scientists such as Mead, and present-day historians such as Rose, who have tried scientifically to gird human dignity, freedom, rationality, morality, and classical democracy in their work, are in the minority. They hope to draw us back from total immersion in a technocracy that has long since been set in motion. If Lasch's commentary on the continuing humanist/Skinnerian controversy is any indication, such debates over future humanity and society are still very much in play.[41] This crisis of the self is not only apparent among academics, scientists, and intellectuals, but it also plays out on a regular basis in popular literary and cinematic media.

Indeed, most of us are aware, on some level, of this ongoing crisis of the self and society. But we don't know what to do about it. As Lasch notes, we have in the last century and a half undermined our traditional ideology of the self and social practice in our social networks, in the family, and in the community, the home, and in education. We have so thoroughly subjected them to the rigors of expert scientific and bureaucratic (and commercial) management that their old integrity seems lost for good.[42] Likewise, we cannot try, as did the Romantics, the utopians, and those in the 1960s counterculture, to return physically or mentally to the garden. Our break with nature is also irreversible. And so, as Lasch argues, we are left with an existence where much of our time is spent

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Consult his discussion of this debate on pages 215-20.

[42] Ibid.

surviving a system that is layered with dehumanizing activities and hollow social interaction in corporate and suburban life, where meaningful exchange and a sense of community have been replaced with endless artificial consumer amusements and diversions.[43] We invest ourselves -- our emotions, beliefs, and values -- in things that have no genuine humanity in them. We are dissolving the self.

While I agree with some aspects of Lasch's commentary on our millennial predicament, I do not share in his overly cynical 'gloom mongering.' I do believe that the self and social democracy in the Western, especially the American, context is increasingly in jeopardy because of the predominance of technocracy, scientific instrumentalism and unchecked capitalism. But I do not believe that we are as yet over the brink and hopelessly lost, to brave a contemporary cinematic reference, inside the 'matrix.'

My reading of the history of modern science has caused me to wonder along with Lasch whether or not the rationalization of self and society through technology has gotten us as much human 'progress' as we had hoped. With technologies of convenience and adjustment, medical, ergonomic, informational, physical and otherwise, we have deceived ourselves into believing that basic human nature, our good old 'selves,' have somehow been transcended. Yet it is abundantly clear that human shortcomings, combined with, and tremendously amplified by, burgeoning technocracy, speak loudly to the contrary. Like Lasch, I support democratic social reform, environmental stewardship, and human freedom.[44] But I am not sure that either the "moralistic philosophy of

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[43] Ibid., 57-59, 193-96.

[44] Ibid., 253.

progress" embedded in hard-line liberal-democratic humanist social science, or liberal/conservative behaviorist perspectives, provide us with viable alternatives.[45] We need a theory of the self that is stronger, one that is not constructed merely as a means for surviving technocracy, but one, as Lasch argues, that can transcend it and return us, however gradually, to genuinely human community, ethics, and meaning in Western culture.[46] Happily, as Mead would point out, Western society is not our only reference point. I find hope in the realization that corporate-driven Western technocracy has not yet overtaken the planet completely. We still have a good chance.

[45] Lasch describes humanistic social science theory in psychology this way on page 228.

[46] Ibid., 255.

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Manuscript Division, The Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

The Library of Congress houses the papers and correspondence of Margaret Mead in their entirety. The collection is divided into two main categories: the Papers of Margaret Mead and the South Pacific Ethnographic Archives. This study utilizes the Papers of Margaret Mead exclusively. Item cited from these papers are designated in this study according to the subject heading, container number, and folder number established by the Manuscript Division. Subject headings and their corresponding container numbers are listed as follows.

Collection: Papers of Margaret Mead (1901-1978), 1911-1978

Subject Heading:	Container Number
Organization Folders, American Council on Education	E 46
Organization Folders, American Psychological Association, and Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, 1942-1977	E 49
Organization Folders, Menninger Foundation Folders	E 180
Organization Folders, Office of War Information, 1943-1945	E 154
Organization Folders, White House Conference on Children and Youth, 1949-1963	E 166
Special Working Groups Folders, 1934-1978, Committee for National Morale	F 1

Harvard University Archives, Nathan M. Pusey Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts

The Harvard Archives house the papers and correspondence of B. F. Skinner in their entirety. Materials in this collection are organized into several categories according

to call number and subject heading, box number, and folder number. Items cited in the present study are designated accordingly. General subject headings and call numbers for cited materials are listed below.

Collection: Papers of Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990), 1928-1979

Subject Heading:	Call Number
Reprints	HUGBS 485.72
Chronological Correspondence, ca. 1928-1979	HUGFP 60.10
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