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Introduction

This is the story of how a small group of anthropologists, many of them students of the German émigré Franz Boas, shaped American thought from the late nineteenth century until the mid-1960s by democratizing American conceptions of culture, putting class analysis on the agenda of American social science, rehabilitating the American character, studying American values, and reconciling American culture and civilization.

My story begins in 1886, when Franz Boas left Germany to seek his fortune in the United States. Between the time of his arrival in the United States and his death in 1942, Boas reoriented American anthropology around a broad, pluralistic, relativistic, and holistic conception of culture. The connotations of pluralism, relativism, and holism were not present in Matthew Arnold's humanistic conception of culture as "the best that has been thought and known in the world," nor were they present in E. B. Tylor's charter definition of culture in its technical, anthropological sense as a "complex whole."[1] To these connotations, anthropologists subsequently added a concern with patterning and a stress on the structural aspects of culture.[2] Although new in American usage, these connotations had long been familiar in Germany, where, from the late eighteenth century on, the educated middle classes invoked a particularistic and relativistic *Kultur* to defend their way of life from the threat posed by a

[1] Matthew Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism," in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79; Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (London: J. Murray, 1871), 1, quoted in A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1952), 43.

[2] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "Clio and the Culture Concept: Some Impressions of a Changing Relationship in American Historiography," in *The Idea of Culture in the Social Sciences*, ed. Louis Schneider and Charles Bonjean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 81–82.

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universalistic civilization emanating from Paris.[3] In the United States, this conception of culture fell on peculiarly fertile ground.

How, I wondered, did such a broad, German-inflected conception of culture become so pervasive in American thought that, in 1948, the popular economist Stuart Chase pronounced it "the foundation stone of the social sciences"; that, in 1952, the anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn claimed that it was comparable to such concepts as evolution and gravity; and that, in 1954, the educator John R. Everett identified it as "the indigenous American concept of culture"?[4] Why did the culture concept become so much more pervasive in American thought than in English or French thought? And why did culture, in the anthropological sense, come to be seen both in England and on the Continent as peculiarly American?[5]

American receptivity to a German-inflected conception of culture can be explained, in part, by the enormous influence wielded in American universities before the First World War by Boas and other German, or German-trained, scholars. It may also have been the case, as the Austrian émigré Eric Wolf once suggested, that their disdain for "artificiality and outer form" predisposed Americans to adopt the "informal and internal" German understanding of culture. But the more that I thought about American receptivity to borrowings from German thought, the more it seemed to me that the culture concept also spoke to the need of educated Americans to overcome their long-standing sense of cultural inferiority to Europe. In what follows, I examine the peculiar fit between American anthropology and American cultural nationalism, specifically, how anthropological concepts helped to meet the "need," as the literary historian Alfred Kazin put it in 1942, "to chart America and to possess it."[6]

Beginning in the 1920s, American anthropologists embarked on a campaign to make Americans culture-conscious. Becoming "culture-conscious," as Ruth Benedict explained in 1929, meant learning how to detach oneself from the taken-for-granted conventions of one's own culture, to appreciate "the intriguing variety of possible forms of behavior" manifested by other cultures, and to

[3] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. Vol. 1: *The History of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (1978; repr., New York: Pantheon, 1982), 3–50.

[4] Stuart Chase, *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Inquiry into the Science of Human Relations* (New York: Harper, 1948), 59; Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture*, 3; John R. Everett, "American Culture in the World To-Day: Reflections on a UNESCO Meeting," *American Quarterly* 6 (1954): 247.

[5] Kenelm Burridge, "The Concept of Culture Revisited: A Personal Retrospective," *Social Analysis* 41 (1997): 58; Barbara Duden, "Rereading Boas: A Woman Historian's Response to Carl N. Degler," in Carl N. Degler, *Culture versus Biology in the Thought of Franz Boas and Alfred L. Kroeber* (New York: Berg, 1989), 25.

[6] Eric R. Wolf, *Anthropology* (1964; repr., New York: Norton, 1974), 19; Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood, introduction to *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, ed. Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5; Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (1942; repr., New York: Harcourt, 1982), 486.

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develop tolerance for other people's values.[7] In 1946, Benedict told Clyde Kluckhohn that it was "a really crucial matter whether" Americans could become culture-conscious about other peoples. For it would be "fatal to all peace" if Americans continued to "see every evidence of other nations' different cultural assumptions as examples of moral perfidy," without understanding that "a piece of unfamiliar behavior" was "really an expression of their total cultural experience."[8] Was it possible, asked Margaret Mead in 1951, "to make self-consciousness bearable to Americans?"[9] For Mead, becoming culture-conscious meant getting into the habit of invoking the phrase "in our culture" to qualify one's generalizations about human nature. By 1959, Mead could report that "the words 'in our culture' slipped from the lips of educated men and women almost as effortlessly as do the phrases that refer to period and to place."[10]

My book examines the intersection between anthropologists' campaign to make Americans culture-conscious and American cultural nationalism by tracing the dissemination – first to social scientists in cognate disciplines, then to other intellectuals, and finally to educated Americans – of the culture concept and the corollary concepts of social class, national character, value, and civilization. By concept, I mean concept in the strong philosophical sense established in the seventeenth century: concept as "an idea of a class of objects, a general notion." A concept serves, in Robert Redfield's words, as a "form of thought" that guides "the investigator's choice and arrangement of facts." But a concept can also be what Raymond Williams called a keyword. Keywords, Williams explains, register the larger "formations of meaning" that people devise to come to terms with "central experiences" in their lives. Indeed, they matter enough, as Daniel Rodgers reminds us, that persons "fight for control *over* them."[11]

I trace the development of these concepts within intellectual and social networks that linked anthropologists to social scientists in neighboring disciplines and to nonspecialist intellectuals. To reconstruct these networks, I have made extensive use of unpublished correspondence in which anthropologists and their correspondents tried out ideas, enlisted financial patrons, and, in the process, formed what David Hollinger has called a "discourse community." The correspondence also allows me to trace anthropological concepts

[7] Ruth Benedict, "The Science of Custom: The Bearing of Culture on Contemporary Thought," *Century Magazine*, April 1929, 642, 648, 649.

[8] Ruth Benedict to Clyde Kluckhohn, 16 May 1946, HUG 4490.3, Clyde Kay Maben Kluckhohn Papers, courtesy of the Harvard University Archives (hereafter Kluckhohn Papers).

[9] Margaret Mead, quoted in Eric Larrabee, *The Self-Conscious Society: The State of American Culture at Mid-Century* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), 19.

[10] Margaret Mead, "A New Preface," in Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934; repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), vii.

[11] Q. v. "Concept," *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*, 3rd ed., ed. R. W. Burchfield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 169; Robert Redfield, *The Little Community* (1955; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 151; Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 13; Daniel T. Rodgers, "Keywords: A Reply," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988): 671.

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as they developed over time in a way that reliance on published work alone does not.[12]

That there was an intimate association between the culture concept and American cultural nationalism is hardly surprising. For the culture concept, as Eric Wolf reminds us, emerged in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe at a moment when a people's claim to possess a distinctive culture, or way of life, strengthened that people's claim to recognition to constituting a nation-state. What was different about the United States was that Americans achieved political independence long before they achieved cultural independence from Europe. As we shall see, the notion of separate and integral cultures that anthropologists popularized lent itself to the "rediscovery" of America in the years after the First World War. It also informed the American studies programs that proliferated after 1945 and were dedicated to "the study of American culture, past and present, as a whole."[13]

Five distinctive features of American anthropology also help to explain why anthropological concepts enjoyed so much currency in twentieth-century American thought. First and foremost, only American anthropologists made culture their "master term," or core concept. In contrast, British anthropologists were preoccupied with social structure, German anthropologists studied race, and French anthropologists evinced little interest in culture until after the Second World War.[14]

Second, the distinctive four-field orientation of American anthropology that Boas institutionalized at Columbia – instruction in cultural (or cultural/social) anthropology, physical (or biological) anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics – endowed the discipline with unusual breadth. Although few American anthropologists commanded all four fields, they admired "generalists" who did. This breadth helps to explain why Clyde Kluckhohn construed anthropology as an "intellectual poaching license."[15]

[12] David A. Hollinger, "Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals," in *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, ed. John Higham and Paul K. Conkin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 42–63.

[13] Henry Nash Smith, "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?" *American Quarterly* 9 (1957): 197–208; reprinted in *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline*, ed. Lucy Maddox (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1–12, on 1.

[14] Robert Redfield, "Social Science among the Humanities," in *Human Nature and the Study of Society: The Papers of Robert Redfield*, vol. 1, ed. Margaret Park Redfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 55; Marshall Sahlins, "'Sentimental Pessimism' and Ethnographic Experience; or, Why Culture Is Not a Disappearing 'Object,'" in *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, ed. Lorraine Daston (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 166–167; Matti Bunzl and H. Glenn Penny, "Introduction: Rethinking German Anthropology, Colonialism, and Race," in *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*, ed. H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 1–30.

[15] George W. Stocking, Jr., "The Basic Assumptions of Boasian Anthropology," in *Delimiting Anthropology: Occasional Inquiries and Reflections* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 40–41; Sydel Silverman, "The United States," in Fredrik Barth et al., *One Discipline, Four Ways: British, German, French, and American Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 331; Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 21.

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Because of its breadth, anthropology did not fit neatly into the threefold division of the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities that became institutionalized in the American academy after 1945. Anthropologists also resisted assignment to one or the other of the "Two Cultures" of literary intellectuals and scientists that the English scientist-turned-novelist C. P. Snow discerned in 1959.[16] Although commonly classified as a social science, and therefore represented in the Social Science Research Council, anthropology also sent representatives to the National Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies.[17] Alfred Kroeber may have been unusual in refusing to identify himself as a social scientist, but he spoke for many anthropologists when he defined himself as a scientific humanist and extolled anthropology's mixed parentage of "natural science" and "aesthetically tinged humanities."[18] Robert Redfield, who, as we shall see, worked on the margins of anthropology and sociology, famously depicted anthropology as "pulled toward" the natural sciences in its methodology, but "held back" by the subject matter – culture – that it shared with the humanities.[19] As what Eric Wolf described as "the most scientific of the humanities, the most humanist of the sciences," anthropology was nothing if not interdisciplinary, "a discipline between disciplines."[20]

Third, anthropology came into its own after 1945 as one of the so-called behavioral sciences institutionalized in the Harvard Department of Social Relations, the Harvard Russian Research Center, the Behavioral Sciences Division of the Ford Foundation, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.[21] Devoted, as Clyde Kluckhohn put it, to "finding out what makes people tick," the behavioral sciences went "scientific in a big way" by demonstrating that "the data of culture and social life" were "as susceptible to exact scientific treatment as one of the facts of the physical and social sciences."[22] In so doing, they helped to bring about what Kluckhohn's Harvard colleague, the sociologist Talcott Parsons, called a "shift away from economics" and from

[16] John Higham, "The Schism in American Scholarship," in *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 14–23; C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (1959; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Wolf Lepenies, *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[17] Redfield, "Social Science among the Humanities," 44.

[18] A. L. Kroeber, "The Personality of Anthropology," in *An Anthropologist Looks at History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 177; A. L. Kroeber, "Concluding Review," in *An Appraisal of Anthropology Today*, ed. Sol Tax, Loren C. Eiseley, Irving Rouse, and Carl F. Voegelin (1953; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 361.

[19] Robert Redfield, "Relation of Anthropology to the Social Sciences and the Humanities," in *Human Nature and the Study of Society*, 109–110.

[20] Wolf, *Anthropology*, 88, x.

[21] John Gillin, ed., *For A Science of Social Man: Convergences in Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology* (New York: Macmillan, 1954); Bernard Berelson, "Behavioral Sciences," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 2:41–44; Peter S. Senn, "What Is 'Behavioral Science'? – Notes toward a History," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 2 (1966): 107–122.

[22] Clyde Kluckhohn, "Anthropology," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 4 April 1953, 25, 49–50.

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economists' rational, self-interested conception of human behavior toward recognition of the nonrational, even irrational, aspects.[23] The behavioral sciences thus continued the transatlantic revolt against positivism that had begun in the 1890s when European theorists first began to pay attention to "the nonlogical, the uncivilized, [and] the inexplicable" in an attempt to "exorcise" the irrational.[24]

Yet a fourth distinctive feature of American anthropology was that so many of its leading figures were, in one sense or another, outsiders. Not only Franz Boas but also his students Robert Lowie, Alexander Goldenweiser, and Edward Sapir were foreign-born. Although American-born, Alfred Kroeber spoke German as his first language. Even the old-stock Americans Clyde Kluckhohn and Robert Redfield never felt completely at home in America.[25] As women, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead had to overcome formidable obstacles in forging their careers. There was also the matter of religion, or the lack thereof; anthropologists were an unusually secular lot, many either secular Jews or lapsed Protestants. Thus the ethnicity, temperament, gender, and religion of leading anthropologists between the world wars gave anthropology an unusual profile in the American academy at a time when American-born Protestant males dominated most of the humanities and the social sciences.[26]

This unusual profile also helps to explain why anthropologists were charter members of the American liberal intelligentsia that coalesced between the First World War and the 1950s. David Hollinger has traced the roots of this intelligentsia to the cosmopolitanism – or anti-provincialism – of lapsed Protestants, many of whom were Midwesterners rebelling against "the village virus" of small-town America, and secular Jews, many of them Eastern Europeans, breaking out of the *shtetl*.[27] From the First World War into the 1950s, its members waged a culture war to open up the academy, and American culture in general, to non-Christians. As their rallying cry, they invoked "the scientific ethos," which held that scientists belonged to a community that transcended ethnic, religious, and even national identities. Their imagined community

[23] Howard Brick, "Talcott Parsons's 'Shift Away from Economics,' 1937–1946," *Journal of American History* 87 (2000): 490–514.

[24] H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 1977), 35–36.

[25] Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life* (1949; repr., Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 4.

[26] David A. Hollinger, "Cultural Relativism," in *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity: Studies in Ethnoracial, Religious, and Professional Affiliation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 174.

[27] David A. Hollinger, "Ethnic Diversity, Cosmopolitanism, and the Emergence of the American Liberal Intelligentsia," in his *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 56–57. In a 1970 survey of some sixty thousand American academics, anthropologists were the most secular of the disciplinary practitioners surveyed. George W. Stocking, Jr., "Animism in Theory and Practice: E. B. Tylor's Unpublished Notes on 'Spiritualism,'" in *Delimiting Anthropology*, 117.

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subjected research findings to exacting scrutiny, treated ideas as communal property, and refused to bend to sacred or supernatural authority.[28]

As we shall see, anthropologists made their biggest contribution to the culture war waged by the liberal intelligentsia by developing "cultural relativism" as both a methodological axiom and a polemical weapon. As a methodological axiom, cultural relativism enjoined researchers to strive to understand other cultures on their own terms by breaking free, as Franz Boas put it, of the "shackles," or conventions, of their own culture.[29] As a polemical weapon, cultural relativism called into question, as Clifford Geertz once put it, "the familiar, the received, and the near at hand."[30]

Anthropologists' iconoclasm also derived from fieldwork, which early in the twentieth century became their discipline's *rite de passage*. Fieldwork, which Clifford Geertz defined as "localized, long-term, close-in, vernacular field research," could produce a "dislocatory effect" that, as the editors of the monumental *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* put it in 1930, enabled the fieldworker to view any culture, his or her own included, not "as endowed with an unyielding and inherent place in the scheme of things," but rather as "mutable" and a "variant."[31]

Fifth and finally, anthropology was notable for the sizable number of prominent public intellectuals that it produced. Why so many American anthropologists became public intellectuals is not entirely clear. One reason may have been the example of Franz Boas, who from early in the twentieth century until his death campaigned against nativism, hostility to immigrants, persecution of German-Americans, and racialist thought.[32] A second reason could be that a number of anthropologists had literary aspirations: Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, and Robert Redfield were published poets; Clyde Kluckhohn wrote travelogues before he became an anthropologist. Sapir, Benedict, Redfield, Kluckhohn, Robert Lowie, and Margaret Mead all contributed book reviews and articles to mass-circulation magazines, the *New York Times*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*. Then, too, there was the commercial success that

[28] David A. Hollinger, "The Defense of Democracy and Robert K. Merton's Formulation of the Scientific Ethos," in *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 80–96; David A. Hollinger, "Science as a Weapon in *Kulturkämpfe* in the United States during and after World War II," ibid., 155–174.

[29] Franz Boas, "The Aims of Ethnology," in *Race, Language and Culture* (1940; repr., New York: Free Press, 1966), 636.

[30] Hollinger, "Cultural Relativism," 169–170; Clifford Geertz, "The World in Pieces: Culture and Politics at the End of the Century," in *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 251.

[31] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Hanging Out," *New York Review of Books*, 22 October 1998, 69; "War and Reorientation," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 1:203.

[32] George W. Stocking, Jr., "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* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 92–113.

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Margaret Mead's trilogy of works on the South Seas (*Coming of Age in Samoa*, *Growing Up in New Guinea*, and *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*) and Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* enjoyed. Last but certainly not least, in passing judgment on their own civilization, anthropologists convinced educated Americans that if they could not prescribe cures for American ailments, they could help to diagnose those ailments.[33]

As public intellectuals, anthropologists "repatriated" anthropology by applying anthropological techniques fashioned for the study of "primitive" cultures to many aspects of American life. The material that they collected in their fieldwork warranted both cultural critique and social engineering.[34] Yet anthropologists were slow to study American culture itself. As late as 1950, Clyde Kluckhohn complained that social scientists' "discovery of America" was far from complete, that educated Americans knew more about the "manners and morals" of South Pacific islanders than about their own. Within a decade, however, anthropologists rivaled social novelists and foreign visitors as authoritative commentators on American life.[35] When, in his 1957 tome, *America as a Civilization*, the journalist-turned-American-studies-scholar Max Lerner attempted "to grasp – however awkwardly – the pattern and inner meaning of contemporary American civilization and its relation to the world of today," his publisher, Simon and Schuster, placed his book squarely in "the great tradition of [Alexis] De Tocqueville and [James] Bryce." Lerner himself said that Tocqueville, Bryce, and other foreign observers could "now be read as amateur anthropologists of American behavior." Although Lerner did not claim to possess an anthropologist's detachment, he nonetheless drew on the substantial authority that anthropologists had garnered by the late 1950s.[36]

That authority rested on the widespread acceptance by non-anthropologists of three claims to objectivity that anthropologists had advanced since the 1920s. The first claim rooted objectivity in fieldwork by trained investigators who, in the words of the consummate fieldworker Bronislaw Malinowski, lived as participant-observers among the people they were studying for the purpose of grasping the native "point of view."[37] The second claim rooted objectivity in

[33] Raymond Firth, "The Study of Values by Social Anthropologists," *Man* 53 (1953): 149.

[34] George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 111.

[35] Clyde Kluckhohn, "Mid-century Manners and Morals" (1950), in *Culture and Behavior: Collected Essays of Clyde Kluckhohn*, ed. Richard Kluckhohn (New York: Free Press, 1962), 323–335, on 323. Here Kluckhohn reiterated a point made by John Sirjamaki in "A Footnote to the Anthropological Approach to the Study of American Culture," *Social Forces* 25 (1947): 253–263.

[36] Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), xi, 639, 951–952; M. Lincoln Schuster to Leslie A. White, 17 July 1957, box 5, Leslie A. White Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (hereafter White Papers).

[37] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922; repr., Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1984), 6, 25.

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the fact that anthropologists necessarily approached other cultures as outsiders.[38] The third and final claim rooted objectivity in anthropologists' detachment from their own culture. In 1928, Alfred Kroeber ascribed "the anthropological attitude" to Europeans and Americans becoming culturally introspective in the aftermath of the First World War and thereby acquiring the ability to dissect their own cultures as they would "foreign" or "dead" cultures. Along with this detachment, Kroeber claimed, came "the ability to conceive of culture as such."[39]

By meticulously describing the mundane, ordinary, and everyday aspects of American life, anthropologists filled in the so-called Jamesian void, the invidious contrast that intellectuals since Henry James had drawn between the "barrenness" of the American scene and the much denser texture of European life.[40] The popular success of Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd's 1929 community study *Middletown* prompted the literary critic Malcolm Cowley to wonder whether such ethnographies of the American scene would eventually usurp "the place held by documentary novels," for the Lynds had access to "all sorts of facts . . . that a novelist could not supply out of his notebooks or his imagination."[41] In the early 1950s, the literary critic Lionel Trilling praised the "sense of social actuality" evoked by David Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* (which is discussed in Chapter 3). Were ethnographic works such as *The Lonely Crowd*, Trilling asked, taking over "the investigation and criticism of morals and manners" that had been, ever since Matthew Arnold, "one of literature's most characteristic functions"?[42]

In what follows, I look at how the anthropological attitude was disseminated to American audiences, and how its dissemination opened up new ways of charting and possessing American culture. Chapter 1 rehearses the career of the cultural concept from its inception in the work of Franz Boas in the late nineteenth century through the early 1950s, by which time anthropologists had come very close to capturing for the social sciences the term "culture." By then, social scientists in other disciplines, intellectuals, and even educated Americans not only construed culture in a broad, pluralistic, relativistic, holistic manner, but also identified this conception as a peculiarly American one.

Chapter 2 traces the development of a distinctive American understanding of social class in which classes came to be seen as subcultures distinguished by their cultural attributes. Key figures in calling into question the axiom of

[38] Clark Wissler, foreword to *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd (1929; repr., New York: Harcourt, 1957), vi.
[39] A. L. Kroeber, "The Anthropological Attitude," *American Mercury*, April 1928, 491.
[40] Clifford Geertz, "The State of the Art," in *Available Light*, 119; Henry James, *Hawthorne* (London: Macmillan, 1879), 42–44; Philip Rahv, quoted in *America and the Intellectuals* (New York: Partisan Review, 1953), 89.
[41] Malcolm Cowley, "Muddletown," review of *Greenwich Village, 1920–1930*, by Caroline F. Ware, *New Republic*, 15 May 1935, 23.
[42] Lionel Trilling, "Two Notes on David Riesman," in *A Gathering of Fugitives* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957), 85, 86, 93–94.

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America classlessness were Robert and Helen Lynd, the self-trained fieldworkers who subjected Muncie, Indiana, to anthropological scrutiny, and the entrepreneurial anthropologist W. Lloyd Warner, who brought to bear many of the same techniques he had used earlier in fieldwork among Australian aborigines in long-term studies of Newburyport, Massachusetts, and Morris, Illinois. On the strength of these "ethnographies of the American scene" anthropologists' cultural authority came to rival that of social novelists and foreign visitors. For the detail marshaled in these ethnographies thickened the texture that many American intellectuals had long felt was missing from American life.

Chapter 3 focuses on anthropologists' collaboration in the 1930s and 1940s with psychiatrists and other students of the relationship between culture and personality. In so doing, they became parties to the long-standing debate about the making of Americans. What they contributed to this debate were an emphasis on socialization and a broad definition of American nationality. At the heart of their inquiries into the relationship between culture and personality was curiosity about what made a Frenchman a Frenchman, a Russian a Russian, and an American an American. National character studies thus represented a significant expansion of anthropologists' horizons beyond "primitive isolates" to the developed and developing world. Hereafter, anthropologists would figure prominently as transatlantic intellectuals. Although the controversy aroused by some postwar studies of national character tarnished culture-and-personality research in the eyes of many social scientists, interest in delineating the American character spilled over into American history and American studies in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Chapter 4 discusses anthropologists' efforts after the Second World War to study values scientifically, despite the resurgent positivism of American social science. Inspired by Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict, Clyde Kluckhohn investigated the "implicit culture," the unconscious canons of choice that distinguished Americans from other peoples. As a prophet of the "New Anthropology," Kluckhohn urged that as much attention be paid to the similarities of cultures as to the differences. Modeling anthropology on linguistics, he searched for the cultural equivalent of the phoneme, the basic unit of language. As an active participant in the postwar American quest for national purpose, Kluckhohn envisioned a new American ideology, a scientifically informed "faith" that would "give meaning and purpose to living" as it supplanted "supernatural" religion.

Chapter 5 shows how the convergence between Alfred Kroeber's "natural history of civilizations" and Robert Redfield's "social anthropology of civilizations" paved the way for the development of both global anthropology and world history. As anthropologists took up the study of "peasants," of peoples engaging modernity, and of civilizations, both living and historic, they narrowed the long-standing gap between "culture" and "civilization." In so doing, they helped to convince American intellectuals, if not educated Americans, that the United States did indeed possess a creative high culture commensurate with a technologically advanced civilization. Anthropologists' turn to civilization

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