

JERRY GERSHENHORN

Melville J. Herskovits  
*and the Racial Politics of Knowledge*



*Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge*

Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology

Series Editors

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JERRY GERSHENHORN

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In Memory of Rhoda Gershenhorn



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## Series Editors' Introduction

**M**ELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS was and remains a controversial figure in understanding West African and African diasporic (African American) cultures. Like some other of the later students of Franz Boas at Columbia, such as his friend Margaret Mead, Herskovits did some research within the United States but also carried Boasian cultural relativism and antiracism to analyzing cultural traits and lifeways beyond the borders of the United States.

Herskovits's dissertation research, like Mead's, was library ethnology, in his case, on cattle complexes in East Africa. He then followed Boas in using a primary tool of racist science, head-form measurements, to undercut claims about race as a stable category and about a "natural" hierarchy of races.

Having completed a major piece of research in what was then called "physical anthropology" (and now would be called "biological anthropology"), Herskovits returned to analysis of cultural traits. The work for which he is most remembered insisted on the viability of "survivals" from what Herskovits considered a homogeneous West African culture. He visited Dahomey (now Benin) and stressed continuities between the West African homeland and the diaspora, making observations (though not doing sustained participant-observation fieldwork) in Brazil, Suriname, Haiti, Trinidad, and the American South.

The interpretation that African Americans were still to significant degrees African rather than American has, over the years, been welcome to those maintaining barriers to assimilation, first to white segregationists, then to Black Power separatists, that is, both to those seeing people of African origins as essentially backward and to those seeing spiritual superiority in an (always singular) African heritage. Although generally endorsing Herskovits's positions, Jerry Gershenhorn chronicles criticism

from Herskovits's contemporaries during the struggle for black civil rights.

Herskovits maintained the atomizing focus on cultural traits and trying to sort out the origins of particular traits that was a characteristic of the research program of Boasians trained before him. His efforts to identify traits as "African" or "European" paralleled those of, for instance, Elsie Clews Parsons trying to sort out what was Spanish and what indigenous in the cultures of Mesoamerica and South America. Herskovits stressed that acculturation was not one-way, specifically that southern (United States) white ways were influenced by African ways of speaking, and so forth, but did not make the move from attempting to sort out historical origins and subsequent movement of traits to holistic, synchronic analysis of functioning contemporary cultures. He remained a Boasian of the sort that predated his education rather than focusing on cultural integration as many of his contemporaries did (functionalists as well as Boasian contemporaries like Margaret Mead, Ruth Landes, and their near-contemporary who was also his and their mentor, Ruth Benedict).

There is ongoing and heated discussion of *The Myth of the Negro Past* and Herskovits's claims about "African survivals" in the New World. Gershenhorn puts this phase of Herskovits's work in the context of his earlier work challenging the fixity of separate Negro and Caucasian "races" in the United States and his later work in building a program of research on Africa at Northwestern University. That Northwestern was where Africanists were produced is widely known. Less well known is how Herskovits blocked from the means of production (publication and research funding) those not indebted to him or not supporting his positions (and position of primacy) during the era when area studies was heavily funded by the U.S. government and foundations (particularly the Ford Foundation).

Beyond maintaining his primacy as a gatekeeper for Africanist research while wrapping himself in a mantle of "objectivity," Herskovits very much sought to be a public intellectual and to guide U.S. policy toward Africa. However, he was more successful in gaining and maintaining control of African studies than he was in directing U.S. foreign policy. To no apparent effect, he criticized support for colonial and white supremacist regimes, and he was generally unable to dissuade Cold Warriors from policymakers' conflating assertions of African independence

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from incipient siding with the Soviet Union in a bipolar world. The tale of attempting to influence policy that Gershenhorn tells is a depressing one for those who seek to transform expertise about cultures into policies that take account of realities of different ways of understanding the world instead of sorting everything into Manichean binaries of good (pro-American) and evil (anti-American).

For the field of Africanist and Afroamericanist anthropology through the mid-1960s, Herskovits's network and tactical decisions (including marginalizing other Boas-trained anthropologists committed to more intensive fieldwork, such as Zora Neale Hurston and Ruth Landes, and using the rhetoric of "objectivity" to exclude black scholars) are the primary narrative of what developed and of obstacles placed in the way of other developments. Gershenhorn's biography provides material from Herskovits's extensive archive both for celebrating Herskovits's accomplishments and for questioning the beneficence of his dominance and its legacy.



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*Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge*



# Introduction

It is bad to arrive too quickly at the one or the many. — Plato, *Philebus*

**W**E BEGIN the new century like we began the last, debating the proper approach toward social and political concerns relating to race and culture. Yet the terms and the nature of the debate have changed. At the beginning of the twentieth century, race and culture were generally framed in hierarchical terms, with white Anglo-Saxon Protestants at the top of the developmental scale. In the United States, as in much of the rest of the world, white men held powerful political and social sway; African Americans, in particular, were subjugated politically, economically, and socially. Abroad, Africans and Asians suffered similarly under Western imperialism. Those who were nonwhite, non-Western, or female had little voice in global politics or in the academy. According to mainstream scholars, African culture was nonexistent, and black American culture was merely a distorted version of Anglo-American culture.

Today, much has changed. Nationalist movements vanquished Western colonialism in Africa and Asia. In the United States, social movements for civil rights and women's liberation overturned legally sanctioned racial and gender inequities. Scholars now generally reject the notion of a social hierarchy based on race, gender, or culture. Indeed, African, African American, and women's studies have emerged as respectable academic subjects. These far-reaching changes, however, have sparked a new global discourse on race and culture that is fraught with controversy. In the United States, many of today's political debates are anchored in culture; political battles and elections are often won or lost on the basis of cultural questions. Many liberals argue for a national acceptance and celebration of cultural diversity, a notion that includes

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gender, sexual orientation, phenotype, and religion, along with race and ethnicity. Advocates of cultural diversity in education and politics have popularized the term “multiculturalism” in support of their goals. In this political climate, many social and cultural groups that long suffered from discrimination now emphasize their group identity to make political and social gains. Women, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, in particular, have asserted their political identities, emphasized the significance of cultural heterogeneity, and analyzed the harm caused by past sociopolitical hierarchies.<sup>1</sup>

Although these strategies have yielded important gains in the United States — affirmative action policies, civil rights legislation, black studies programs, women’s studies programs — some liberals and many conservatives have criticized what they term “identity politics” for creating social divisiveness and intolerance toward opposing views.<sup>2</sup> For example, liberal sociologist Todd Gitlin has argued that identity politics has so fragmented American society that it has limited our capacity to make a unified attack on poverty and economic inequality throughout the world.<sup>3</sup> On the other side, many conservatives and religious fundamentalists have attacked identity politics as part of their larger battle against the “immorality” of popular culture. In this battle they have decried affirmative action, feminism, and reproductive rights; demonized homosexuals; attacked immigration policies; and blamed poverty and crime on the “immoral” lifestyles of the poor. Meanwhile, conservatives such as social critic Dinesh D’Souza argue that identity politics has led to intolerance for opposing views and an irrational stifling of free speech.<sup>4</sup> Finally, conservatives attack multiculturalism “and its demonic twin, ‘political correctness,’” as stand-ins for their distaste for liberals’ emphasis on minorities’ rights.<sup>5</sup>

Paralleling this American debate on identity politics is an international debate on the relative merits of cultural particularism and universalism. As cultural and ethnic groups in the United States have fought for a greater voice in politics and society, so have formerly disenfranchised countries sought to assert their identities in international politics. This has led to contentious debates about specific cultural rights versus universal human rights. For example, in the decades since the 1947 adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), newly independent states in Africa and Asia have challenged the document’s generality. They have argued that the UDHR was created with

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limited non-Western input and that it is ethnocentric. Critics find untenable the notion of defining human rights universally, across all cultures. If cultures create their own values and all cultures are worthy of respect, how can a single set of human rights be defined and applied?<sup>6</sup> Thus contemporary arguments about race and culture have been often polarized between those who see cultural politics as destroying common values and goals and those who see it as safeguarding minority group interests from the tyranny of the majority.

During the past century many men and women have helped transform the debates on race and culture from acceptance of racial hierarchy and imperialism to controversy about identity politics and cultural relativism. In the early to mid-twentieth century, however, one man in particular not only challenged the racial and cultural norms of his day but also envisioned the multiculturalism that was to emerge in the last decades of the century. From the 1920s to the 1960s American anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits confronted questions about race and culture in innovative and groundbreaking ways. Born into a world of racial and cultural hierarchy, of white supremacy in America and European imperialism in Asia and Africa, Herskovits promulgated the principle that all cultures deserve respect. In 1948 he asserted that twentieth-century anthropologists had made two outstanding contributions to the understanding of the human condition. They had “ceaselessly combatted the concept of racial superiority” and had “documented the essential dignity of all human cultures.”<sup>7</sup> He could just as easily have made this statement about himself, for his work as an anthropologist and a social critic undermined hierarchical ways of thinking about humanity and underscored the value of human diversity.

This book is an intellectual biography of Herskovits; it is also a study of the intersection of his work with racial politics. As Sidney Mintz has pointed out, “Science aspires to stand outside the subjective wishes, biases, and blind spots of society itself. . . . But what gets studied, when, and how, are matters that cannot escape the social, economic, and political climate in which decisions about the place and goals of science are made.”<sup>8</sup> When Herskovits entered academia in the early 1920s, white men dominated the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Black studies and African studies were virtually nonexistent. Herskovits helped move African American studies and African studies into the academic mainstream. He supported black and white scholars who sought to



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undertake research on black history and cultures in Africa and the Americas. At Northwestern University, he established anthropology courses on African cultures and African American cultures (construed broadly as the cultures of peoples of African descent throughout the Americas), and he studied black cultures by focusing on blacks as the subjects, rather than the objects, of history. Indeed, his focus on the cultures of peoples of African descent in Africa and the Americas presaged the more recent conceptualization of the African diaspora. Herskovits's efforts joined him with the few black colleges and black scholars who were making efforts to study African Americans and to place blacks at the center of study.<sup>9</sup>

Herskovits sought to undermine racial and cultural hierarchy throughout his career. In his earliest work on the physical anthropology of American blacks—in the midst of 1920s modernist attacks on Victorian thought—he challenged the Victorians' understanding of race as a biological concept. Using anthropometry, the tool that racist scholars had used to support the notion of a racial hierarchy, Herskovits refuted the dogma of race as an unchanging category, fixed in nature. In *The American Negro* (1928), Herskovits demonstrated that most American blacks had both African and European ancestry, but contrary to expectations, they exhibited very similar physical characteristics. This finding disproved the interpretation of traditional racial theorists, who assumed that the physical traits of individuals in mixed racial groups would be marked by great differences based on the definition of a race as a people with similar physical characteristics and a common racial ancestry. Herskovits's finding that a mixed-race group was physically homogeneous rendered the biological definition of race untenable. Indeed, Herskovits maintained that American blacks, by virtue of their mixed heritage, were not really a race at all but a mixed population group. Further, he demonstrated the fallacy of the racist view that mulattoes could not reproduce. Consequently, Herskovits challenged the biological definition of race and helped steer scholars toward a more modern conception of race as a sociological category. By doing so, he undercut the notion that race determined behavior. Instead, he substituted environment and culture for race as the explanation for behavioral and intellectual differences between individuals. In this way he attacked racial hierarchy and demonstrated the falsity of intellectual rankings based on race.

Herskovits spent the middle part of his career marshalling evidence to demonstrate the richness and complexity of African and African Ameri-

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can cultures and the influence of African culture in the Americas. His field trips to Suriname, Dahomey, Haiti, Trinidad, and Brazil convinced him of the important manifestations of African culture in the Americas, which he, like many other liberal scholars, had initially rejected due to an assimilationist bias. In his ethnographies and in his magnum opus, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Herskovits challenged those who maligned black culture and African culture, including black and white liberal scholars who argued that black American culture was a pathological version of white culture with little or no African influence. The contrasting positions taken by Herskovits and his critics brought into sharp relief the debate over the nature of black culture. At a time when most white Americans assumed black Americans to be inferior as a race and a culture, Herskovits's establishment of the strength and complexity of African and African-influenced cultures was a great intellectual achievement.<sup>10</sup>

Prominent liberal scholars, black and white, rejected Herskovits's conclusions about black American culture because they disavowed the existence of a distinctive black American culture. Moreover, they rejected Herskovits's argument that recognition of the complexity and strength of ancestral African cultures would ameliorate race prejudice against African Americans. Instead, they maintained that by providing evidence of differences between black and white culture, Herskovits was furnishing support for those who would justify segregation of the races on the basis that blacks were incapable of assimilating into mainstream American culture.<sup>11</sup> Herskovits countered this position by insisting that black assimilation into American culture and preservation of the African heritage were not mutually exclusive. Nor was acculturation a one-way street. Just as blacks had been influenced by white American culture, so had black culture, with its African-influenced cultural traits, contributed to white American culture. Herskovits maintained that African Americans were just "like other folk in their ability to assimilate what is new to them and to give of their aboriginal endowments to those with whom they have come into contact."<sup>12</sup>

During these years Herskovits convinced anthropologists to accept acculturation studies as a vital part of the discipline, pushing anthropological study beyond its traditional focus on isolated, nonliterate societies. He laid the foundation for a dynamic view of cultural change that emphasized cultural diversity and cultural pluralism. At the same time, by providing evidence of the diverse influences on American culture, Herskovits helped transform notions of American identity from exclu-

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sive and unitary (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) to inclusive and pluralist. Herskovits's cultural relativism — the belief that cultures could not be ranked in a developmental hierarchy — underpinned his leadership in acculturation studies and thrust him into the middle of a philosophical debate among intellectuals. As an anthropologist and public intellectual, Herskovits argued for mutual respect among cultures and attacked ethnocentric evaluations of cultures.

After the Second World War Herskovits's expertise and interest in the expansion of African studies made him a key force in the development of African studies programs. American involvement in the Second World War and the Cold War induced policymakers to call for the creation of area studies programs to provide experts so that the United States could implement policies to serve its global interests. In this context, Herskovits established the first major interdisciplinary African studies program in America in 1948. In 1957 he played a pivotal role in the founding of the African Studies Association and served as its first president. Herskovits's support for African studies helped ensure that Africa would become a legitimate area of academic study.

In his later years Herskovits moved to the political stage to argue for a voice for Africans in their own, and the world's, affairs. The combination of Herskovits's own views and the requirements of the Second World War, which broke down the barriers between government and social science, propelled him into the role of social critic. As the foremost Africanist in the country, he felt compelled to eschew his previous stand against activist scholarship. He entered foreign policy debates as a strong critic of America's Africa policy and an advocate of African self-determination. Herskovits lobbied the U.S. government to support the independence of Africa and help bring an end to white supremacy regimes on the continent. In 1947 he wrote the American Anthropological Association's Statement on Human Rights that was submitted to the United Nations, advising against an ethnocentric formulation of human rights. He sought to safeguard developing nations by ensuring that a statement of human rights based on Western values would not be imposed upon them.

Although he benefited from the rise of African studies, Herskovits criticized the Cold War assumptions on which that development was based. He challenged the Cold War paradigm by advising policymakers to reject considering African countries as merely objects in the Soviet-American battle for global hegemony. As a policy analyst and impresario of African studies, Herskovits stressed the necessity for African self-determination

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and decolonization. But American policymakers generally rejected Herskovits's advice to deal with Africa on its own terms. They formulated policy with Africa based on the assumption that the continent was a Cold War battleground between the United States and the Soviet Union and refused to include Africans in the decision-making process. According to Herskovits, a collaborative process between Americans and Africans would advance U.S.-African relations, serve America's foreign policy interests, and improve life in Africa. In ignoring Herskovits's advice, American policymakers undermined African political and economic development. Herskovits's contributions to black studies, African studies, and modern notions of cultural pluralism made him a key figure in twentieth-century intellectual discourse.

Several scholars have made valuable contributions to the Herskovits story. In 1973 the anthropologist George E. Simpson published a brief biography with selected articles by Herskovits. Simpson's book emphasized Herskovits's contributions to anthropological study: his seminal work in African and New World Negro anthropology and his research in economic and physical anthropology, ethnopsychology, anthropological theory, and folklore.<sup>13</sup> Simpson, however, did not attempt to place Herskovits's work in its larger historical context.

In 1994 folklorist Robert Baron wrote "Africa in the Americas: Melville J. Herskovits' Folkloristic and Anthropological Scholarship, 1923–1941," the first dissertation on Herskovits. Baron sought to alter the view of Herskovits as obsessed with a search for African survivals in black American cultures. Instead, he emphasized Herskovits's views on the dynamism of culture, on its responsiveness to internal and external influences. In an in-depth analysis of Herskovits's fieldwork and writings, Baron traced the development of Herskovits's ideas about acculturation from the early 1920s to his 1941 publication of *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Baron argued that Herskovits was interested in diverse influences on African American cultures, in addition to the creativity of black peoples in adapting their cultures to these influences. Baron viewed folklore as the centerpiece of Herskovits's work on African diaspora cultures. He maintained that Herskovits reconciled particularism and universalism by focusing attention on the unique characteristics of African American cultures while recognizing that blacks assimilated aspects of mainstream American culture when given the opportunity to do so.<sup>14</sup>

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Walter Jackson, who has written the most extensive historical account of Herskovits's pre-World War II writings, highlighted Herskovits's cultural particularism in his research on black cultures in the Americas. Jackson chronicled Herskovits's change from an assimilationist perspective on black culture to a pluralist view that emphasized the influence of African cultures. Based on extensive research into Herskovits's papers and publications, Jackson traced Herskovits's career from the 1920s to the 1940s in the context of contemporary debates among anthropologists about method and purpose. Jackson argued that Herskovits's interpretation of black cultures was grounded in his ethnographic research, his ethnic identity, the influence of Harlem Renaissance writers, and the influence of his mentor, Franz Boas.<sup>15</sup>

Historians Kenneth Janken and Robert L. Harris Jr. have criticized Herskovits's institutional role in the development of black studies. They reproved Herskovits for his failure to help "integrate African-American scholars into the mainstream" during his tenure as chair of the American Council of Learned Societies' Committee on Negro Studies. They argued that Herskovits limited black participation so that he could sidetrack a proposal to challenge racial discrimination against black scholars in academia and in the use of historical archives.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these valuable works, they do not add up to a fully integrated story. Past scholarship has focused on Herskovits's role as a champion of African survivals in black culture, a contributor to anthropological and folkloristic methodology, a trailblazer in African studies, or a paternalist who marginalized blacks in academia. Historians and anthropologists have concentrated on Herskovits's pre-World War II research, emphasizing his search for evidence of African culture in the Americas and the summation of that work in *The Myth of the Negro Past*. A number of anthropologists have stressed Herskovits's contributions to anthropology and folklore. By contrast, little has been written about Herskovits's post-World War II promotion of African studies and his critique of American policy toward Africa during the Cold War. Because scholars have limited themselves to examining portions or aspects of Herskovits's work, we have only a partial understanding of his impact on racial and cultural discourse.

This book is the first attempt by a historian to comprehend Herskovits's entire professional career, from his graduate study at Columbia University in the early 1920s to his death in 1963. It is intended to fill the

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gap in scholarship on Herskovits by examining his entire intellectual career from a historical perspective. Based on extensive research in the Herskovits papers, Herskovits's publications, and related manuscript collections and writings, I argue that Herskovits's work on Africans and African Americans is inextricably connected by his embrace of cultural relativism, his attack on racial and cultural hierarchy, and his conceptualization of Negro studies, which he defined as the study of peoples of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, Herskovits's work during his early and late career was designed to accord dignity to all cultures; he maintained that marginalized peoples were worthy of study in higher education and consideration in politics.

Herskovits's work was marked by tension as he shaped and was shaped by the context in which he worked. He sought to liberate contemporary scholarship from outmoded ways of thinking as he tried to liberate himself from traditional views and methodologies. In his early physical anthropology study of American blacks, he sought to undermine the use of race as a biological concept, but he never completely rejected its use in biological terms. In fact, he inadvertently reinforced the race concept by continuing to employ physical measurements in his research.

Herskovits's institutional role in the development of black studies was also characterized by tension. As an anthropologist coming of age during the 1920s, Herskovits sought to employ the authority of scientific objectivity and detached scholarship to counter pseudoscientific racism and advance black studies by empowering the subjects of his research — black people — as creators of their own culture. Thus, while he championed the view that an objective scholar must eschew social activism in one's scholarship, Herskovits's own work was designed to correct previous scholarship that upheld racial and cultural hierarchy and to underscore the need for tolerance of all cultures. Although this objectivist stance served his cause well at the time, it later placed him in a conservative role, especially when he gained influence with the philanthropic foundations that played a large part in financing social science research. During the 1930s and 1940s, as an adviser to the Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Rockefeller Foundation, Herskovits's strict advocacy of detached scholarship served to sidetrack important efforts to help African American scholars surmount racial discrimination in academia. At times, he also used his power with the

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foundations to try to stop black colleges and scholars from undertaking research in areas of mutual interest. Although Herskovits often supported the work of black scholars, like Ralph Bunche and Johnnetta B. Cole, he criticized certain activist black scholars—notably Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois—who he considered propagandists rather than scientists because of their social-reform orientations. By consistently promoting the benefits of detached scholarship without regard to social-reform goals, Herskovits denied the political nature of scholarly inquiry. Indeed, he failed to admit that his own egalitarian values and assumptions influenced his work. Thus his institutional impact on the development of black studies was mixed. While he generally acted to include black studies, black scholars, and black students in the mainstream of academia, at times he hindered progress toward that goal.

The tension in all of Herskovits's work is largely derived from the way he tried to balance universalism and particularism. In his dependence on scientific inquiry to help him subvert the effects of racism on cultural anthropology, he embraced objective scholarship as a universal truth. In his fieldwork, however, Herskovits upheld a particularistic perspective evidenced by his pluralist view of culture. His beliefs in egalitarianism and cultural relativism convinced him to reject racial hierarchies, to oppose the notion of universal values, and to argue that no outsider could objectively evaluate another culture. Throughout his career Herskovits assumed a challenging and tension-inducing position that sought to combine a belief in science as a unifying force for humanity with a pluralist conception of culture.

In 1993 Johnnetta B. Cole, former president of Spelman College in Atlanta, recalled the liberating feelings inspired by her first reading of Herskovits's *The Myth of the Negro Past* forty years earlier. Cole, a graduate student in anthropology under Herskovits during the 1950s and 1960s, explained that the book “affirmed how terribly human” was the African American experience.<sup>17</sup> She remembered “gasping with shock and joy over what I learned there. . . . [F]orty years ago such thinking [on the African cultural influence in America] was revolutionary—and even heretical.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, much of Herskovits's work was revolutionary. Through his research, writing, and teaching, he dignified the lives and struggles of peoples of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic.

## The Making of an Anthropologist

There are times when man's entire way of apprehending and structuring the universe is transformed in a fairly brief period of time, and the decades which preceded the First World War were one of these. — Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914*

MELVILLE HERSKOVITS was born in 1895 and grew up during a time of tremendous intellectual and cultural change in American society. The period from the 1890s to the 1910s — Herskovits's childhood years — marked a watershed in American history, with Victorian ideas and social conventions under attack and a skeptical modernist ethic on the rise. Grounded in strict gender, race, and class divisions, Victorian culture valued fixed notions of social role and hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> While intellectuals during the Victorian age stressed “the [impermeable] barrier between civilization and savagery, between the cultured and the uncultured,” modernists emphasized the fluidity, change, and unpredictability of culture, society, and politics.<sup>2</sup>

Coming of age during this period of social transition, Herskovits's multilayered background inclined him toward a modernist perspective. His experience as an assimilated Jew growing up in small-town America, his youthful pursuit and ultimate rejection of rabbinical study, and his overseas service during World War I alienated him from Victorian certainties and likely drew him toward anthropology and a modernist approach.<sup>3</sup> The son of Jewish immigrants — his father was born in 1853 in Hungary, his mother in 1861 in Germany — Herskovits grew up in a household that celebrated both Jewish and Christian holidays, accommodating Jewish tradition to mainstream American culture. While the Herskovitses ate special dinners on Christmas and Easter, they also postponed young Melville's birthday party when it fell on the same day as the



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Jewish New Year celebration of Rosh Hashanah. Herskovits also attended Hebrew school beginning in 1906, perhaps in preparation for his Bar Mitzvah.<sup>4</sup> During Melville's childhood, the Herskovits family lived in medium-sized towns and cities with relatively small Jewish populations and followed the cultural and economic path of mid-nineteenth-century German Jewish immigrants, who by the late nineteenth century "had become significantly acculturated. This was reflected in their rapid economic and social mobility, their institutionalization of Reform Judaism, and the intensification of their collective identity as Americans and Jews."<sup>5</sup>

While Herskovits's father, Herman, a clothing merchant, provided for the family's material needs, Herskovits's mother, Henrietta, imparted her love for cultural pursuits to her two children, Melville and his older sister, Charlotte. In her diary, Henrietta recorded the following words that she attributed to the great German poet Goethe: "Let not a day pass, if possible, without having heard some fine music, read a noble poem, or seen a beautiful picture."<sup>6</sup> While Charlotte — who later attended the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music — studied piano, Melville began violin lessons at age six and piano lessons when he was ten. An undated news clipping recorded what was probably his first violin recital: "The little round, chubby Herskovits boy of six years, everyone felt like hugging as he made those tones with the utmost accuracy."<sup>7</sup>

Herskovits's early devotion to music was matched by his love of books. An undated news clipping with the salutation "Dear Santa Claus," signed "Your little friend Melville Herskovits," reads as follows: "If you can't bring me very much please be sure and don't forget to give me a nice real thick book with lots of reading and pictures in it, but don't let the words in it be too big, because I am just six years old and have just started to school."<sup>8</sup> For his ninth birthday, at a party with sixty children, Melville received twenty-five books, among other gifts.<sup>9</sup>

Henrietta's poor health due to tuberculosis induced the family to move from Bellefontaine, Ohio, to El Paso, Texas, when Melville was about ten. After Henrietta's death in 1911, the family moved to Erie, Pennsylvania, where Melville graduated from high school the following year. Undecided about his future, Melville worked at his father's clothing store until 1915.<sup>10</sup>

Growing up in an assimilated Jewish family in predominantly Protestant small towns meant that Herskovits was constantly faced with ques-

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tions about his identity and his place in American society. His sensitivity to these questions foreshadowed his interests in cultural change as a student, teacher, and practitioner of anthropology. Reflecting the desire of many minorities to minimize their differences from the mainstream, in 1927 Herskovits wrote that “the Jew has ever taken on the color of the culture in which he lives, and far from identifying himself with his own typical culture (whatever there may be of it) he usually tries to become as completely acculturated as is possible to the culture in which he finds himself.”<sup>11</sup> This attempt to minimize his own cultural differences was based on his knowledge that in the United States, Jews were considered an “inferior” group.<sup>12</sup> Of his own identity, he insisted that “neither in training, in tradition, in religious beliefs, nor in culture am I what might be termed a person any more Jewish than any other American born and reared in a typical Middle Western milieu.”<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that Herskovits wrote these words during a period of historically high levels of anti-Semitism in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, Herskovits’s attempts to minimize the significance of his own Jewishness do not square with his youthful experience. As a child he attended Hebrew school and synagogue, and as a young man he pursued rabbinical study at Hebrew Union College, based on his father’s recommendation.<sup>15</sup> During his rabbinical study, Herskovits experienced a crisis of faith when he began to doubt his belief in God. Although some of his friends advised him to continue his studies by telling him that Judaism was an elastic faith that could abide many beliefs, even agnosticism, Herskovits ended his rabbinical studies.<sup>16</sup>

After attending the University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College for two and a half years, Herskovits enlisted in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in 1918 following the United States’s entrance in the First World War. Subsequent to the signing of the armistice in November 1918, but before returning stateside, Herskovits studied French history at the University of Poitiers, where he also served on the editorial staff of the student newspaper. Meanwhile, his months of study earned him a certification to teach French to non-French speakers.<sup>17</sup>

Upon his return to the United States, Herskovits transferred to the University of Chicago, where he majored in history. This move to Chicago suggests that the young veteran now sought a more cosmopolitan milieu following his service in Europe.<sup>18</sup> In addition to his history

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courses, Herskovits took several courses in Russian, reflecting an emerging interest in Communism and the recent Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>19</sup>

In Chicago Herskovits embraced radical politics, self-reliance, and the intellectual life. Rejecting his father's offer of financial assistance, the young man declared his intention to support himself as a matter of principle. Although postwar inflation had caused him financial hardship, he asserted that continued inflation would inspire him to "put more zeal in my small efforts to establish a [political] regime that will make [corporate] profiteering impossible." Meanwhile, Herskovits contributed to a cooperative bookstore by "putting aside fifteen cents a day," which also permitted him to purchase books there.<sup>20</sup> Reflecting his leftist politics in a letter to the editor of the *American Jewish Review*, he castigated a leader of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations for failing to take a strong prolabor position.<sup>21</sup>

During Herskovits's college years, Jews faced increasing anti-Semitism, with the imposition of quotas and other measures to reduce the number of Jews at many American universities, including Princeton, Duke, Yale, Harvard, Northwestern, and Columbia. Harvard president A. Lawrence Lowell, an officer of the Immigration Restriction League, cut Jewish enrollment based on his belief that Harvard had a "Jewish problem"—too many Jewish students. In 1917 Columbia University enacted new admissions policies, which in four years reduced Jewish students from 40 to 22 percent of the student population.<sup>22</sup>

In this climate of rising bigotry, Herskovits directly confronted anti-Semitism at the University of Chicago. After the leaders of a student social club made plans to hold separate dances for Jews and Gentiles and hurled epithets at Jewish club members, Herskovits wrote a scathing letter to the editor of the school newspaper and resigned from the club.<sup>23</sup>

Upon graduating from the University of Chicago, Herskovits moved to New York—perhaps the most modernist city in America—to pursue graduate study. During the 1920s New York was home to many of the leading modernist writers, artists, and musicians, including Sinclair Lewis, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Langston Hughes, and Duke Ellington.<sup>24</sup> Lewis satirized middle-class conformity and consumerism in *Babbitt*. Millay's poems embraced women's sexual freedom and equality. Hughes celebrated black cultural contributions such as jazz and the blues. Ellington was perhaps the foremost composer in the history of jazz.<sup>25</sup>

In New York Herskovits joined a veritable modernist crusade to over-

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turn Victorian certainty, hierarchical thinking, and biological determinism. Urbanization had created a new generation of intellectuals that included African Americans and the children of immigrants, as well as those of old-stock Americans. Separated from their small-town roots, they rejected traditional middle-class values such as social conformity, moral rigidity, and excessive piety. Disillusioned by the devastation of the First World War, these young people were poised to deliver the coup de grâce to Victorian authority.<sup>26</sup> Liberation and rebellion were in the air. These were heady times for men and women who saw themselves as part of an intellectual vanguard.<sup>27</sup>

Initially, Herskovits studied at the New School for Social Research — the rare school that welcomed Jewish students — arriving there just one year after it opened in 1919. Embracing radical politics, Herskovits was attracted by the alternative brand of education offered at the New School. Its scholars, including such luminaries as John Dewey, Horace Kallen, Alexander Goldenweiser, Charles Beard, and Thorstein Veblen, sought to “generate a body of critical social science that would contribute to the ‘reconstruction’ of western society along more egalitarian and scientific lines.”<sup>28</sup>

Disaffected by conservative values that supported laissez-faire economic ideology and racial, gender, and cultural hierarchy, Herskovits, like many young intellectuals, denounced capitalism and was drawn to radical organizations.<sup>29</sup> By now a self-described political leftist, Herskovits indicted the Republican Party in 1920 for “staunch, unerring stupidity.”<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, he briefly joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and later published articles in H. L. Mencken’s *American Mercury*, the preeminent medium for the attack on traditional middle-class beliefs.<sup>31</sup>

Herskovits’s cohort was influenced by a number of revolutionary thinkers who established the relative nature of the physical world. Albert Einstein discovered that time and space were not immutable. Rather, they were contingent on the observer’s viewpoint. In his research on immigrants and their children, Franz Boas marshaled evidence that head shape changed from generation to generation. By doing so, he undermined the notion of fixed racial traits. This physical relativism influenced modernists toward a relativist perspective about human endeavor.<sup>32</sup>

Herskovits’s leftist political views and his sympathy for the union movement influenced his choice of subject for his master’s thesis in

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political science at Columbia University. In “An Inquiry into the Causes Determining the Arrest of Persons Active in Labor Unions in the United States,” Herskovits examined the arrests of several labor leaders from 1917 to 1919, a period that saw a great upsurge in labor activism and strikes and, in reaction, severe government repression.<sup>33</sup> In one of these cases, American Legionnaires attacked an IWW union hall in Centralia, Washington—a lumber town—and lynched one of the Wobblies, as members of the IWW were known. The surviving Wobblies were tried and convicted of killing two of the Legionnaires during the attack. Based on his study of legal briefs, political pamphlets and leaflets, newspaper and magazine articles, and the files of the American Civil Liberties Union, Herskovits concluded that labor activists, like the Centralia Wobblies, were arrested and prosecuted because of pressure from businessmen interested in protecting their economic interests.<sup>34</sup> In a more recent analysis of this period, labor historian Melvyn Dubofsky concurred with Herskovits’s conclusions, writing that the Centralia case indicated the “lengths to which public authorities would go to destroy” the IWW.<sup>35</sup>

During this period Herskovits befriended a group of like-minded individuals who were interested in art, music, and literature and who embraced gender and racial equality and radical politics. This group included future anthropologists Ruth Benedict, whom Herskovits met at the New School, Margaret Mead, and A. Irving Hallowell; future sociologist Malcolm Willey; and Herskovits’s future wife, Frances Shapiro (1897–1972). Frances, the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, was born in Minsk, Russia. An aspiring writer, she studied at the New School and briefly lived in Paris. She and Melville were married in July 1924 in Paris during Melville’s first research trip.<sup>36</sup> In New York the young married couple lived in an “attractive and bohemian apartment near Columbia.”<sup>37</sup>

Following the completion of his M.A. degree, Herskovits pursued the study of anthropology at Columbia under Franz Boas, who would have a profound effect on the young man’s career. Herskovits’s transition to anthropology was influenced by two of his New School professors, economist Thorstein Veblen, who encouraged Herskovits to “read in the literature” on nonliterate cultures, and anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser, a former Boas student who recommended that Herskovits study with Boas.<sup>38</sup> Herskovits’s shift in disciplines paralleled that of many

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others who studied with Boas.<sup>39</sup> Disillusioned with industrial society, Herskovits and his Columbia classmates, most notably Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, were attracted to the study of non-Western cultures and the possibilities they offered for alternate forms of social organization and creative expression. Recalling those years, Mead remembered Herskovits as “a bouncing, cheerful, unquenchable extrovert, writing with gusto, and a fair pride in what he produced.” Herskovits was confident that he would achieve great success as an anthropologist. At a dinner in Chinatown, he told friends, “I don’t expect to be a Boas, but I do expect to be a [Robert] Lowie or an [William] Ogburn.”<sup>40</sup>

Boas, who trained most of the influential American cultural anthropologists of the early twentieth century, had an enormous intellectual influence on Herskovits. By the early 1920s when Herskovits attended Columbia, Boas and his students, notably, Alexander Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Edward Sapir, Alexander Goldenweiser, and Paul Radin, had transformed American anthropology. Although Boas and his students sometimes disagreed, certain characteristics unified the group. As Regna Darnell has observed, they “shared a heady sense of solidarity, viewing themselves as rewriting the history of anthropology, creating a professionally respectable and scientifically rigorous discipline whose practitioners were loyal to a common enterprise.”<sup>41</sup> They also endorsed the Boasian interpretation of culture, which differed from previous notions of culture that equated it with civilization. For the Boasians, culture was plural. Therefore they rejected the notion of culture as evolutionary, with race, culture, and language dependent on each other. Rather, the latter three were independent of each other.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Boas rejected the idea that the Nordic (northern European) race was the most evolved race. He disputed racial hierarchy, questioning the practice wherein “a race is commonly described as the lower, the more fundamentally it differs from our own.”<sup>43</sup>

According to Boas’s culture concept—which replaced the race concept as an explanation for human behavioral differences—environmental and cultural influences were the primary determinants of behavior and intelligence; they were not predetermined by racial endowment. Leading the intellectual movement against Victorian notions of racial hierarchy and pseudoscientific racism, Boas sought to move anthropology away from its emphasis on racially determined behavior toward a more complex view that emphasized the environmental impact on hu-

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man behavior and culture. He led the effort of natural and social scientists to debunk notions of white genetic superiority that had been “proven” by an earlier generation of Victorian anthropologists and biologists. Therefore Boas encouraged his students to concentrate on small geographic regions to more effectively examine the environmental and psychological causes of cultural change.<sup>44</sup>

Prior to the emergence of Boas and other modernists, “scientific” racism dominated the intellectual worldview. Anthropology’s development as a professional field of study during the late nineteenth century coincided with the political, economic, and social oppression of African Americans and Native Americans and the rapid expansion of European imperialism in Africa and Asia. Operating within this milieu, most anthropologists accepted the popular notion of a racial hierarchy and sought to employ science to “prove” popular views. Moreover, scientific support served to harden racist beliefs. During the late nineteenth century Social Darwinism and its view of evolutionary human development provided a theoretical construct in support of racial hierarchy. Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), the leading advocate of Social Darwinism, maintained that Darwin’s natural selection took place among humanity as a struggle between unequal nations, classes, and races. Spencer rejected human equality based on his belief that the various racial groups were at different evolutionary stages. His ideas on racial hierarchy were widely accepted by America’s top scholars. Within this perspective, physical anthropologists devoted themselves to the taxonomy of race based on particular visible physical traits, known as phenotype. Biologists also classified humanity into different races. Social scientists assumed the superiority of Western civilization and the inferiority of “primitive” cultures from which the West had evolved. These scientists and social scientists arranged the races in a hierarchy according to which was the most “civilized” and “intelligent.”<sup>45</sup>

Defining a race as a large segment of humanity that shared similar physical characteristics, scientists employed different physical measurements and correlated these with qualitative criteria in their attempts to categorize humanity into different races. Sorting humanity into races through the measurement of various physical characteristics was the primary purpose of scholars engaged in anthropometry, a subfield of physical anthropology. Quite often, scientists ranked the races based on preconceived notions, with Europeans at the top and Negroes at the

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bottom. Foreshadowing the efforts of later scientists, eighteenth-century German anatomist Peter Camper had classified races based on differences in “facial angle,” which he defined as “the angle that an imaginary line from the bottom of the chin to the top of the forehead forms with a horizontal line at the bottom of the chin.” Camper maintained that the higher races were characterized by perpendicular faces (orthognathous), while the lower races evidenced sloping faces and protruding jaws (prognathous). Camper argued that “Negroes . . . were the most prognathous of races” and therefore the lowest.<sup>46</sup>

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries scientists continued to employ various head measurements to categorize and rank the races, despite inconsistent results. In the mid-nineteenth century Swedish scientist Anders Retzius and his follower, French scientist Paul Broca, devised methods of measuring and comparing human heads and skulls to rank the races based on qualitative differences, usually in terms of superior or inferior intelligence. These scientists sought criteria that fit their assumptions of European superiority and African inferiority.<sup>47</sup> During the 1840s Retzius first employed the cranial index, the ratio between head length and head width, to classify the races and asserted that long-headed (dolichocephalic) peoples were more civilized than short-headed (brachycephalic) peoples.<sup>48</sup>

When anthropometric measurements failed to support the presumed racial hierarchy, scientists tried different measurements or rationalized the results instead of rejecting their assumptions. Broca did both. When he discovered that, because the human skull is irregularly shaped, human skull measurements varied according to who was doing the measuring, Broca stopped measuring heads and began comparing brain weight.<sup>49</sup> In 1861 he wrote, “In general, the brain is larger in mature adults than in the elderly, in men than in women, in eminent men than in men of mediocre talent, in superior races than in inferior races.”<sup>50</sup> Broca also linked facial angle, skin color, hair, and intelligence, arguing that “more or less white skin, straight hair and an orthognathous [straight] face are the ordinary equipment of the highest groups in the human series.” On the other hand, Broca asserted that a “group with black skin, woolly hair and a prognathous [forward-jutting] face has never been able to raise itself spontaneously to civilization.”<sup>51</sup> In his analysis of Broca’s studies, Stephen J. Gould demonstrated that when Broca’s expectations of race, class, or gender hierarchy were not borne out by his research, he would ra-



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tionalize the discrepancies or adjust the figures. For example, when Broca found that German brains weighed more than French brains (Broca was French), he adjusted the weights of the German brains downward due to their relatively larger body size. Broca's use of rationalization to ensure that his data fit his theory was not unusual among physical anthropologists during this period.<sup>52</sup>

Brain studies continued despite the inconsistent results. In his 1906 study comparing three hundred brains of whites and blacks, Johns Hopkins University anatomist Robert Bennett Bean found that Negroes' brains had smaller frontal lobes relative to the posterior lobes. Franklin Mall, a colleague of Bean's, however, weighed the same brains and found no significant racial differences.<sup>53</sup>

This emphasis on measuring head shape and brain size in order to establish white racial superiority continued undisturbed until Franz Boas challenged the traditional view. Just as anthropologists had played a key role in legitimating the nineteenth-century orthodoxy of white racial superiority, so in the early twentieth century a new generation of anthropologists, led by Boas, attacked the notion of a racial hierarchy grounded in nature. Anthropologists played the key role in redefining the way social scientists approached race and race relations.

In his attack on pseudoscientific racism, Boas was influenced by his liberal philosophy, his strict attachment to scientific accuracy, and, perhaps most important, his Jewish identity. Boas's liberalism sensitized him to the inequities caused by racism. Anthropologist William S. Willis observed that the "intensity of Boas's politics and its influence on his scholarship" were demonstrated in 1919 "by his admission . . . that the 'only relief' was to 'explode periodically in print' and then he felt 'a little better for a while!'"<sup>54</sup> As a scientist who could not bear generalizations based on inaccurate data, the pseudoscientific work of racist anthropologists appalled him.<sup>55</sup> Finally, as a German Jewish immigrant, Boas identified with the plight of African Americans. In Germany he had been the victim of anti-Semitism leading to his decision to migrate to the United States, where he endured outsider status as an immigrant and a Jew.<sup>56</sup> By attacking racist science, which concluded that blacks were inferior to whites, Boas was also able to mount an indirect challenge to the anti-Semitic belief that Jews were an inferior race.

Several writers have commented on the propensity of Jews during this period to fight anti-Semitism indirectly by attacking racist discrimi-

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nation against African Americans. During the first decades of the twentieth century both Jews and African Americans faced discrimination, albeit of different magnitude, from racist and nativist groups. This fact joined blacks and Jews in opposition to their common enemies. But as Hasia Diner has pointed out, Jewish organizations rarely attacked anti-Semitism in public because they “feared that too much discussion of the subject might stimulate anti-Jewish sentiment where it had not yet appeared.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, as David L. Lewis has observed, Jews often supported civil rights for African Americans and attacked racist theories to “fight against anti-Semitism by remote control.”<sup>58</sup> It was no coincidence that many of the scholars who joined with Boas to attack racial hierarchy were also Jewish, including Otto Klineberg, Ashley Montagu, Alexander Goldenweiser, and Herskovits. Boas acknowledged this fact in a 1934 speech, noting that much of the important research on race was “the product of Jewish students and scholars.”<sup>59</sup>

Like his mentor, Herskovits’s Jewish heritage made him sensitive to his own outsider status and that of African Americans. David Mandelbaum, a Herskovits student, has observed that “Jews, are, in a sense, born ethnologists.” Like African Americans and other marginal groups, Jews possess a dual consciousness, as Jews and as part of the larger society.<sup>60</sup> And as a Jew who grew up in predominantly Christian small towns, Herskovits felt this outsider status with keen intensity. Moreover, in New York in 1925, the Herskovitses felt the sting of anti-Semitism when they were unable to sublet Margaret Mead’s apartment for the summer because of the landlord’s refusal to rent to Jews.<sup>61</sup> This experience, one that was common for Jews and, more so, for African Americans, reinforced Herskovits’s empathy with African Americans and helped shape the views he articulated in a 1927 article on Jewish identity. He maintained that part of the common cultural tradition of Jews was “the feeling which is ground into every Jew from the time he is old enough to realize that he is somebody different from the people about him.” Consequently, “all Jews have much the same . . . feeling that they are different from their neighbors.” Herskovits believed that Jews and blacks were connected by their common experience of being considered “different, or inferior, or something to be disdained.”<sup>62</sup>

Boas’s attack on the concept of race as a category fixed in nature reached its high point in reaction to the rising nativism before, during, and after

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the First World War. Nativism and its correlate, immigration restriction, gained great popular support in reaction to the millions of immigrants who came to America between 1880 and 1920. Nativists (mostly native-born white Protestants) felt threatened by the influx of Jews and Catholics from eastern and southern Europe. During World War I fears of disloyal foreigners in the service of America's enemies increased xenophobia. After the war nativist feelings peaked in reaction to a wave of strikes and a series of bombings of public officials. Based on their belief that foreign-born anarchists, communists, and unionists caused these disruptions, nativists sought to deport foreigners and end immigration from southern and eastern Europe. This nativist climate gave rise to racist justifications for immigration restriction. *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), written by Madison Grant, a longtime official of the Immigration Restriction League, enjoyed great popularity during the 1920s. Grant argued that the white race was divided between Nordics, Mediterraneans, and Alpines and that the latter two threatened to debase Anglo-America, which he defined as Nordic. In this climate of racist xenophobia, Congress passed in 1924 an immigration bill that severely limited immigration from eastern and southern Europe and excluded Japanese immigrants.<sup>63</sup>

In order to counter the movement in Congress to enact restrictive immigration legislation, Boas formulated a study to demonstrate that the physical traits of immigrants were susceptible to environmental influences. By doing this, Boas would undermine the notion that race and anatomy were fixed in nature and thereby disprove notions of racial inferiority. Ingeniously, Boas employed the tool of the biological determinists—anthropometry—to demonstrate the plasticity of human form. In his famous head-form studies of immigrants and their children, Boas provided evidence that head form changed from generation to generation. Boas's results showing different head shapes for Italian-born immigrants and their American-born children placed the racial determinists on the defensive. According to the traditional definition of race as a group with similar physical traits, Boas's findings, published in 1911, meant that Italians and Italian Americans could be members of two different races. But the notion that a new race could emerge from the offspring of another race rendered the definition of race untenable. The fact that physical characteristics were partially determined by environmental change undercut the notion that racial categories were fixed in

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nature. If physical traits changed from one generation to another, then the physical differences within a particular race would differ over time. Furthermore, if racial categories were not fixed in nature, then race as a biological category was in question. As a result, Boas subverted “simplistic models of biological or racial determinism.” Moreover, the correlation of race with intelligence or any other mental characteristic was controverted.<sup>64</sup>

At Columbia Herskovits became interested in the study of African cultures when he and Ruth Benedict took Boas’s seminar on the economic life of nonliterate peoples.<sup>65</sup> Although Boas studied Native American cultures in his own research, he encouraged his students to consider other parts of the world.<sup>66</sup> Boas had a longtime interest in Africa and African Americans, publishing several articles on those subjects and seeking foundation support, albeit unsuccessfully, to build an African museum that would provide a venue for increasing understanding about Africa.<sup>67</sup> In Boas’s seminar Herskovits concentrated on agricultural societies in the Congo and West Africa, and Benedict focused on eastern and southern African herding societies. Herskovits’s interest in Africa was piqued while Benedict’s was not. He later recalled that he “became interested in the literature, and went on from there to work out the problem that was later published as my doctoral thesis, the study of the position of cattle in East African societies.”<sup>68</sup>

Based on research in the Columbia University library and W. E. B. Du Bois’s personal library, Herskovits’s dissertation, “The Cattle Complex in East Africa,” completed in 1923, was published in 1926 in four installments in the *American Anthropologist*.<sup>69</sup> This was the first application of Clark Wissler’s culture area methodology—used to analyze Native American cultures—to Africa. Elazar Barkan has observed that Wissler, the curator of anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History and a member of the eugenicist Galton Society, was the rare racist who helped advance scientific study. Wissler argued that cultures from all parts of the world evolved in stages from a primitive state to civilization. The culture area concept replaced the older framework in which anthropologists, arguing from conjecture, traced the evolution of culture from lower to higher forms, culminating in the “highest” form, Western civilization. Despite his culture area methodology, Wissler remained attached to a cultural hierarchy with Nordics (northern Europeans) at the top.<sup>70</sup>

In “The Cattle Complex in East Africa,” Herskovits marshaled exten-

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sive evidence from the literature to show that cattle were the central organizing principle behind East African cultures from southern Africa to the Sudan. Then he surveyed neighboring cultures to show how cattle played a diminished role outside of East Africa. Although cattle were raised in other parts of Africa, Herskovits maintained that in East Africa, “the regard for cattle reaches its highest pitch, here that they play the greatest part in the everyday life of their owners, so that no study of the region can be made without considering them.”<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Herskovits argued that “in connection with marriage and divorce, with burial, inheritance, and food customs, and in other important ways, cattle exert a deep influence on East African culture.”<sup>72</sup> For example, cattle were the method of payment by the bridegroom — the “bride purchase” — to the father of the bride before marriage. Cattle also played a key role in marriage ceremonies. Penalties for crimes were often assessed in cattle. Divorce settlements were generally paid in cattle; they were also the usual medium of inheritance.<sup>73</sup>

Herskovits argued that cattle played a diminished cultural role outside of East Africa. For example, the San of southwestern Africa were unsettled hunters who did not breed cattle.<sup>74</sup> Although the Khoikhoi, in the same region, did raise cattle, Herskovits placed them outside the Cattle Complex area, in large part because “none of the observers record anything which parallels the careful systems to be noticed all through East Africa.” In addition, unlike most East Africans, they were nomadic and loosely organized politically. The exclusion of the Khoikhoi from the East Africa culture area, however, seems somewhat arbitrary. Herskovits himself conceded that information about several Khoikhoi rituals was incomplete, and in some ways Khoikhoi culture was similar to those cultures he placed inside the Cattle Complex area.<sup>75</sup> Herskovits also excluded the cultures of the Congo, in this case because of the scarcity of cattle in that region. He distinguished Arab societies from those with the Cattle Complex because of their use of varied livestock, including camels.<sup>76</sup>

Herskovits’s dissertation research laid the groundwork for his 1924 article “A Preliminary Consideration of the Culture Areas of Africa” and his 1930 article “The Culture Areas of Africa,” which made important conceptual contributions to African anthropology.<sup>77</sup> In the earlier article, Herskovits divided Africa into nine culture areas based largely on two broad economic divisions, agricultural and pastoral cultures, but

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rejected the cultural hierarchy. In doing so, Herskovits took an important step toward a more modern view of culture. In this work, he employed Boas's concept of cultural relativism. Boas maintained that because one's values were culturally determined, one would tend to value one's own culture above others. Therefore all evaluations of cultures by outsiders were subjective. Thus Boas taught his students to study other cultures without evaluating them, since any evaluation would be based on an ethnocentric standard.<sup>78</sup>

Although Herskovits's African cultural divisions are obsolete today, they represent an important early attempt to devise a system for understanding African cultures. As Sally Falk Moore has pointed out, "However imperfect, these attempts to make order out of ethnographic chaos, to separate evidence-based classification from any conjectural evolutionary or diffusionist scheme, represented a large step forward."<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, Herskovits's employment of the culture area concept represented an important step away from a Eurocentric cultural hierarchy and a move toward a value-free study of world cultures.<sup>80</sup>



## The Attack on Pseudoscientific Racism

I think the whole concept of race isn't worth the price of admission.—  
Melville J. Herskovits in the *Chicago Daily News*, December 1944

**I**N THE AFTERMATH of World War I the Boasian attack on racial hierarchy and the emphasis on an environmental and cultural view of human development sparked a counterattack by biological determinists. Moreover, the rising tide of nativist sentiment provided support for promoters of racial hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> Biological determinists denounced cultural anthropologists like the Boasians for neglecting “the biological aspect of anthropology and specifically the problem of the differential racial makeup of the contemporary American population.”<sup>2</sup> Many scientists questioned anthropology’s status as a science, as some anthropologists began to move away from biological studies of humans and reject the value of a biological race concept. Therefore the biological determinists sought to revive physical anthropology by supporting a renewed emphasis on it and its analysis of racially determined human characteristics.<sup>3</sup> This debate would provide the opportunity for Herskovits to conduct research into the physical anthropology of African Americans.

The conflict between racialists and culturalists was played out in the National Research Council (NRC), formed in 1916 to coordinate scientific research in the interest of American military preparedness and national defense and principally backed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation. Following World War I the first major institutional attempt to study race was made by the NRC’s Committee on Scientific Problems of Human Migrations (CSPHM), formed in 1922 to finance anthropometric studies of race differences that



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would promote immigration restriction. Robert M. Yerkes, the Yale psychologist in charge of the army's World War I intelligence tests, and Clark Wissler of the American Museum of Natural History, dominated this committee. Both Yerkes and Wissler were members of the Galton Society, an exclusively white Protestant organization formed by the eugenicist anthropologist Charles B. Davenport and the racist author Madison Grant.<sup>4</sup> The CSPHM generally supported studies that investigated biological and not environmental influences and thereby succeeded in postponing the ascendance of the cultural school of anthropology.<sup>5</sup>

During the early 1920s biological determinists, led by members of the Galton Society, and environmental determinists, led by Boas, competed to dictate the direction of anthropological studies. Until the mid-1920s the biological determinists exercised the major influence in anthropology. After that, cultural anthropologists were in the ascendant but faced significant resistance from eugenicists and bio-anthropologists who relied on "simplistic Mendelianism and biometrics."<sup>6</sup>

In this atmosphere dominated by nativists, eugenicists, and racists, foundation support—mediated by the NRC—for cultural anthropology dried up, while studies in archaeology and physical anthropology were readily funded. Consequently, such prominent cultural anthropologists as Ralph Linton, Fred Eggan, and Herskovits began their careers in other fields—Linton and Eggan with studies in archaeology and Herskovits in physical anthropology.<sup>7</sup>

Boas responded to the eugenicists' move against cultural anthropology by using the NRC programs to buttress his own interpretive position. He encouraged his students to participate in "a coordinated attack on the problem of the cultural factor in racial differences" and helped three of them—Margaret Mead, Otto Klineberg, and Herskovits—gain funding from the NRC's Fellowship Program in the Biological Sciences, established in 1923.<sup>8</sup> Mead's study of adolescents in Samoa, Klineberg's study of African American migrants' tested intelligence, and Herskovits's anthropometric study of African Americans all helped undermine previously held assumptions about race. Mead and Klineberg demonstrated that adolescence and intelligence were strongly influenced by environment and culture, not race, and Herskovits revealed the inadequacy of the very concept of race when discussing Americans of African descent.<sup>9</sup> These studies—generated in part by the traditionalists' attack on cultural

anthropology—helped to strengthen the “cultural interpretation of mental differences” and undermine the racial interpretation.<sup>10</sup>

In April 1923, while putting the finishing touches on his dissertation, Herskovits submitted a fellowship application to the NRC on the problem of physical and psychological variability within a racially mixed population.<sup>11</sup> In applying for a grant to do an anthropometry study, Herskovits deviated from his dissertation’s focus on East African cultural anthropology. In fact, Herskovits never even took an anthropometry class at Columbia.<sup>12</sup> So his decision to pursue physical anthropology and study racial mixing was clearly influenced by Boas and the powers at the NRC, who wanted to support studies on the biological, not the cultural, aspects of race. Thus the NRC’s interest in biological studies of race for the purpose of investigating race-related social issues and immigration altered the direction of Herskovits’s early career.<sup>13</sup>

Herskovits planned a two-pronged attack in his research on African Americans. He proposed a study of Harlem blacks (he later broadened his research to include blacks in West Virginia and Washington DC) to ascertain the degree to which African Americans were the product of a mixed racial heritage. He would obtain genealogies and physical measurements of African Americans to determine whether they were a race according to the traditional definition of race, that is, a biological category of people in which there was little physical variation between the members of the group. Then Herskovits would compare the results of his own measurements of black Americans with those done by others of white Americans, black Americans, Europeans, Native Americans, and West Africans. Herskovits expected to find significant physical variation because he believed that black Americans represented a mixture of European and African heritage. Second, Herskovits planned to use anthropometry, the tool of the “scientific” racist anthropologists, to test their belief that race determined behavior. Like Boas, Herskovits believed that environment, not race, was the key to behavior. He would compare “the relation between the ratio of White and Negro blood and mental ability” by employing psychological tests. He also proposed to compare homogeneous—all-white, all-black—groups with the heterogeneous or mixed groups to see if there was a correlation between intelligence, race mixture, and socioeconomic status.<sup>14</sup>

By undertaking a study of race mixing, Herskovits tackled a subject that had been clouded by racist assumptions for generations. During the

late eighteenth century a prominent English doctor, Charles White, who believed that blacks and whites were two different species, claimed that mulattoes were generally unable to reproduce.<sup>15</sup> A century later Herbert Spencer insisted that race mixing between blacks and whites or Asians and Europeans should be discouraged or even banned because the result would be individuals with “constitution[s] which will not work properly.”<sup>16</sup> During the 1920s race mixing became an issue of public debate in the context of the campaign to limit immigration to the United States. In 1921 Vice President–elect Calvin Coolidge, influenced by the racist beliefs of Madison Grant, asserted, “Biological laws tell us that certain divergent people will not mix or blend. The Nordics propagate themselves successfully. With other races, the outcome shows deterioration on both sides.”<sup>17</sup> Herskovits’s study was designed to provide an objective view of African Americans’ ancestry and intelligence that was not marred by racist preconceptions.

In order to acquire the necessary anthropological background for his study, in 1924 Herskovits applied for additional funding from the NRC and the International Education Board (IEB), founded the year before by John D. Rockefeller Jr., for a five-month research trip to western Europe. Herskovits proposed to visit major anthropological collections with significant African holdings and to meet with prominent physical anthropologists and ethnologists specializing in Africa.<sup>18</sup>

Discussions between the IEB and the NRC reveal that Herskovits’s emphasis on the biological aspects of his study proved decisive in gaining foundation approval for his project. The IEB and the NRC viewed Herskovits’s plans in the context of the debate over the proper direction of anthropological research. The two organizations wanted to emphasize the connection between anthropology and the biological sciences and to downplay the connection with the social sciences and history. The NRC did not want “[t]o affiliate psychology and anthropology with the historical and sociological sciences,” fearing that such a move “would . . . inhibit their most promising lines of development.”<sup>19</sup> Thus the two funding agencies demonstrated their probiology and anticultural bias in studies of race. By emphasizing physical anthropology, as in the Herskovits study, officials at the two agencies believed they could strengthen the view that race was an inherited category and weaken the opposing view that de-emphasized race and focused on culture as determinative of human behavior and development. An NRC official who supported funding

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the Herskovits trip told the IEB, "I shall be glad to have this case regarded as a test case before your Board concerning relations to the field of psychology and anthropology."<sup>20</sup>

Despite Herskovits's emphasis on physical anthropology, his application for funding was not a sure thing. The eugenicist beliefs of several members of the NRC and their antagonism toward Boas and his students led to a heated debate on the Herskovits proposal. Funding was finally arranged after Boas, backed by allied NRC members, overcame the opposition of Clark Wissler, a prominent member of the NRC.<sup>21</sup> In April 1923 the NRC Board of National Research Fellowships in the Biological Sciences formally approved a one-year, \$150/month fellowship for Herskovits to start after June 1923. He was required to finish his Ph.D. first, which he did that spring, and to work under Boas and Columbia psychologist Edward L. Thorndike. In working under Boas and Thorndike, Herskovits had to navigate between two scholars of differing perspectives, as Thorndike was a supporter of eugenics and a member of the Galton Society.<sup>22</sup> While conducting his research, Herskovits also taught anthropology courses at Columbia University as an unpaid lecturer from 1924 to 1927.<sup>23</sup>

Herskovits was fortunate that continuing personal and substantive divisions within the NRC did not prevent the council from renewing his fellowship in 1924 and 1925. In May 1924 Harvard anthropologist Alfred M. Tozzer severely criticized the council, writing, "Wissler is a perfect stinker. He has tied up everything in the Research Council, received an appropriation of \$7,000.00 for the study of race mixture, has his son appointed a Special Assistant and left everyone else out in the cold." Tozzer characterized these dealings as "crooked business" and called for action against Wissler and Robert Yerkes, who was also "mixed up in it." Tozzer remarked that anthropologists Earnest A. Hooton and Alfred Kroeber (Boas's first graduate student) were also upset but were not doing anything about it.<sup>24</sup> Apparently, pressure on Wissler from Boas and others succeeded in freeing up funds for nonmembers of the NRC such as Herskovits, who was funded for a total of three years.<sup>25</sup> He received steady increases in pay to \$175/month for the second year and \$200/month for the third year; a \$500/year increase was given in June 1925 after Herskovits was married.<sup>26</sup>

In order to proceed on his research, Herskovits needed to make contacts in the various black communities where he would be measuring,

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and he also needed to hire assistants to help him with the measurements and the statistical work. Boas introduced Herskovits to several people, including Sadie Marie Peterson, who could help facilitate his research. Peterson was a librarian at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library (soon to become the repository for the Schomburg Collection after the contributions of books and other material relating to the black experience by Arthur Schomburg), one of the central meeting places for Harlem's black community. Peterson introduced Herskovits to members of New York's black community, including Abram L. Harris, who became a close friend as well as a research assistant on the project.<sup>27</sup>

During 1923 and 1924 Herskovits made other important contacts in the black community. In 1923 he went to meetings of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League and also met with Walter White of the NAACP and Eslanda Robeson, wife of Paul Robeson. Herskovits attended meetings at the editorial offices of the *Crisis*, conferring with its editor, W. E. B. Du Bois. In 1924 Herskovits widened his contacts as he met with Alain Locke, a Howard University professor who was in New York preparing the special issue of the *Survey Graphic* on the "New Negro," and Charles S. Johnson, editor of *Opportunity*, the Urban League journal. During these two years Herskovits gave several talks in Harlem, at the offices of the NAACP, and at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. Among the titles of these talks were "What Is a Race?," "Is There a Racial Psychology?," and "Civilizations of Africa."<sup>28</sup>

Both Boas and Herskovits promoted the training of black anthropologists who could assist on Herskovits's study while preparing for an academic career. They sought financial support for several candidates.<sup>29</sup> In 1925 Herskovits wrote to a prospective donor, "Boas is very anxious, as am I, to have someone trained. The Negroes ought to have a competently trained man to fight their scientific battles for them."<sup>30</sup>

Herskovits employed four black assistants on the study: Louis E. King (based on Alain Locke's recommendation), Abram Harris, Zora Neale Hurston, and Greene Maxwell. King, Harris, and Hurston were also graduate students at Columbia and received funding from the university. King and Hurston collaborated with Herskovits in measuring residents of Harlem; King measured subjects in West Virginia; and Maxwell assisted Herskovits at Howard. Harris performed data tabulations.<sup>31</sup> Hurston's biographer observed that her dedication to this research con-

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vinced her “to take a pair of calipers and stand on a Harlem street corner measuring people’s skulls—an act that many contemporaries felt only Zora Hurston, with her relaxed insouciance, could have gotten away with.”<sup>32</sup>

To broaden his study’s evidentiary base, Herskovits proposed conducting a large series of anthropometric measurements and genealogies at a black college. In January 1925 the NRC’s Committee on Scientific Problems of Human Migrations approved this proposal.<sup>33</sup> Herskovits’s success in gaining financial support for the study of black college students was clearly due to the anthropometric nature of his research. In addition, Alain Locke furnished an important letter of recommendation indicating that Howard University would cooperate in Herskovits’s research.<sup>34</sup> Herskovits would now “be able to do my long-looked-forward to study of correlating standing in the [psychological entrance] tests with various anthropometric Negroid traits.”<sup>35</sup>

With NRC approval, Herskovits wrote to President J. Stanley Durkee (the last white president) of Howard University, asking for formal approval to do anthropometric measurements at Howard. After meeting with “a group of our scientists,” Durkee decided that Herskovits should teach a course at Howard to diffuse any student opposition. “The trouble is that a year or two ago here in Washington, there was a dreadful scandal because a man came in to the public schools and attempted that sort of thing [measurements],” explained Durkee.<sup>36</sup> In that case, the Department of Justice accused a Dutch academic, Herman M. B. Moens, who was conducting research on race mixing, of spying for the Germans. Moreover, nude photographs (apparently of female students) relating to the study were found in Moens’s papers. An obscenity trial and a well-publicized scandal followed.<sup>37</sup> Herskovits agreed to Durkee’s suggestion. In order to avoid any conflict with Howard anthropologist and Africanist William Leo Hansberry, whose specialty was ethnology, Herskovits offered to teach physical anthropology.<sup>38</sup>

Herskovits realized that his project, which involved measuring different anatomical parts of African Americans, was an inherently controversial one. Prior to the emergence of the Boasian paradigm, this type of research had been used to rank the races and demonstrate the inferiority of African Americans. Herskovits sought to allay suspicions and, at least once, employed deception to do so. In June 1924 he told University of Chicago student and future anthropologist Robert Redfield that, when

measuring adults, it was very important to have “some definite tag of some organisations which they respect and know.” Therefore, he continued, “[N]ext year I shall go to the homes of these children [who he measured in their schools], with the standing of the school doctor, as I have encouraged them to think I am, and measure the parents, thus not only getting adult measurements but entire families, which is more important.”<sup>39</sup>

Herskovits also secured the assistance of a number of top Howard scholars, including biologist Ernest E. Just and Locke, in obtaining the cooperation of the students and the administration for the study.<sup>40</sup> Herskovits asked Locke to enlist student support for the project so that they would agree to the measurements. Locke told Herskovits that there were two reasons for student resistance. Some students believed that they were being exploited for someone else’s benefit, while the memory of the controversial Moens case had multiplied distrust of the type of project that Herskovits proposed. Locke assured Herskovits, however, that due to the backing of Durkee and the faculty, and the agreement to have Herskovits teach a course, student resistance would be minimized. Herskovits told Locke that he hoped to avoid controversy by eschewing the measurement of female students.<sup>41</sup>

Herskovits received permission from the NRC to teach a physical anthropology course at Howard. After receiving approval, Herskovits left immediately for Washington DC and was able to report to the NRC that by February 11, 1925, he already had sixty-nine students registered for his class.<sup>42</sup>

Just a month after his arrival at Howard University, a controversy arose that almost proved fatal to Herskovits’s research there. The *Washington Evening Star* reported Herskovits’s talk at the March meeting of the Washington Anthropological Association and distorted it so badly that there was an uproar at Howard that threatened to terminate Herskovits’s research. The distortions included the article’s claim that Herskovits had stated that until recently, the Negro “race was a very unstable combination,” but recently the “blood has had a chance to settle.” Readers interpreted these nonsensical statements to mean that African Americans were inclined toward physical, mental, and moral debilities. In addition, the *Star* reported erroneously that Herskovits’s study demonstrated that blacks were more physically powerful than whites and that Negroes were a “fixed race.”<sup>43</sup> The combination of the *Star* article and the memory

of the Moens case aroused the black community's suspicions and threatened the continuation of Herskovits's research. Only after Locke and other Howard University professors assured the students that the *Star* reports were untrue, and after the *Star* printed a retraction, did the controversy dissipate.<sup>44</sup> Except for the *Star* controversy, Herskovits encountered no problems with his project and received excellent cooperation from the Howard University students. Only occasionally did someone refuse to give a genealogy or to be measured.<sup>45</sup>

The main purpose of Herskovits's anthropometric research was to determine the degree to which African Americans were the products of African, European, and American Indian ancestry. U.S. Census figures indicated that from 1870 to 1920, between 12 and 21 percent of the Negro population were mulattoes, with the 1920 Census putting the figure at 15.9 percent.<sup>46</sup> A finding that most African Americans were of mixed heritage would challenge preconceived notions of them as members of an unchanging biological race. Moreover, any assumptions of racial inferiority would be undermined because generalizations about a group of people with diverse heritage would lack validity. Herskovits's method included taking a large number of anatomical measurements of his subjects and employing a quantitative system to measure skin color. Herskovits then compared these results — which were supposed to indicate biometrically to what degree African Americans were of mixed African, European, and American Indian descent — with the genealogies reported by the study's subjects.<sup>47</sup> This combination of statistical measurements and genealogies would show the extent to which African Americans, according to the samples, represented a mixed population group. Since the reliability of physical measurements and genealogies was questioned in some quarters, Herskovits proposed to employ both. Due to the limited understanding of how physical traits were inherited, relying on only physical measurements would be open to question as to their significance. Herskovits used the genealogies as a check against the physical measurements. However, most whites believed that African American genealogies were unreliable, based on the racist assumption of black sexual promiscuity, which led many to argue that blacks could not identify their biological fathers. Therefore Herskovits used the statistical measurements of the physical traits to determine the reliability of the genealogies and dispel criticism about their use.<sup>48</sup>

Herskovits was convinced that in order to ensure the scientific nature



of his study, as many measurements as possible were required. In a 1927 article he rejected the cephalic index (ratio of head length to head width) when used as the sole basis of racial classification but accepted the index when used along with other calculations.<sup>49</sup> So Herskovits and his assistants took thirty different measurements, which were chosen based on the expectation that they would reveal the results of race mixing. The measurements included standing height, sitting height, width of shoulders, width of hips, head length, head width, cephalic index, height of head, minimum forehead width, distance between inner corners of eyes, distance between outer corners of eyes, distance between the midpoints of the pupils of the eyes, nose height, nose width, nose depth, distance from crease to tip of nose (right side), upper facial height, total facial height, distance between widest part of cheek bones, mouth width, lip thickness (measured at center and right side), ear length, ear width, right hand width, middle finger length (right hand), and four quantitative measures of skin color.<sup>50</sup> The significance of the measurements was based on the assumption that the mean average of these measurements on peoples of different races — whites, blacks, American Indians — would be substantially different.<sup>51</sup>

Based on the advice of T. Wingate Todd, a physical anthropologist at the Anatomical Laboratory in the School of Medicine at Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Herskovits used the Milton-Bradley spinning color top to measure skin color.<sup>52</sup> This device, which the manufacturer intended for use as a toy for children to learn about “the principle of color mixture,” was first employed to measure skin color by the biologist Charles B. Davenport. Herskovits used the color top because it was “the only means devised to date for studying pigmentation in quantitative fashion. For this reason, in spite of the essential artificiality of the findings derived from its use, (since these represent no actual anatomical or physiological facts), it has been employed in this study.” The top came with four disks: black, white, red, and yellow, and by combining them in the proper configuration, skin color could be “very closely approximated, if not exactly matched.” A sheet of paper with a hole in it was placed over the subject’s outer upper arm, and the rest of the arm was covered. As the top was spun, the observer would glance at the top to match skin to top color, adjust the disks to match, and then record a number for each disk color representing the disk configuration. Herskovits noted that consistency between observers might be a problem, as it

would be difficult to guarantee consistent top speed and color evaluations. Nonetheless, he believed that through training observers and analyzing observer differences, these problems could be minimized.<sup>53</sup> Todd advised Herskovits that only with two independent observers would the color test on mulattoes be valid.<sup>54</sup> Apparently, Herskovits rejected this advice, perhaps due to budgetary constraints, as he employed one observer at a time. Later, psychologist Joseph Peterson criticized Herskovits's technique because the spinning velocity of the color top varied. Peterson recommended the use of a "small electric motor" to hold spinning speed constant.<sup>55</sup>

Herskovits was not unaware of the inherent problems in categorizing humanity into biological races. Most important, race resisted definition. Herskovits knew "of no definition of race that is both clear-cut and adequate." Nevertheless, his research sought to test the generally accepted view that a pure race was one in which individuals exhibited very small variability in their physical characteristics. According to this view, race mixing would yield a group that manifested much larger variability of physical characteristics.<sup>56</sup>

Herskovits was not dissuaded by the emerging view among many physical anthropologists that anthropometric measurements were too inconsistent to use to determine race.<sup>57</sup> He assumed that by measuring more traits and not relying on one trait, such as cephalic index, he was being more scientific than other physical anthropologists. But even Herskovits's closest associate in the field, Wingate Todd, who played a key role in advising Herskovits on the methods of carrying forward his study, questioned the use of some of these measurements.<sup>58</sup> Todd told Herskovits, "Your plan for the N.R.C. interests me very much and there is no doubt that it should satisfy that body but it is not sturdy enough thinking to satisfy you. Thick lips and broad noses are no criterion of negro blood but only of one type of negro. There is no direct selection of middle finger length, nasal height, fore-head hair and interpupillary distance in negroes. Purely by accident there may be a difference in these things between a given sample of negroes and a given sample of whites. . . . I do not believe that you should expect these proposals to help a scrap towards a solution of the so-called negro hybrid problem."<sup>59</sup> Despite his respect for Todd's scholarship, Herskovits rejected his friend's advice. Indeed, laypersons also occasionally questioned Hersko-

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vits's methods. The wife of one of Herskovits's Harlem subjects called the measurements "foolishness."<sup>60</sup>

Another problem with some of the measurements was that they could be painful. In February 1926 Herskovits told Todd, "The instruments which we need worst are the head-spanner and the sliding calipers. I was able to borrow a spreading calipers for [Louis] King at the Museum [of Natural History], but he is having to use a pair of French sliding ones, and the sharp points on them make it difficult for him to work with the living."<sup>61</sup>

Herskovits's report on his research — published in 1928 as *The American Negro: A Study in Racial Crossing* — contradicted received opinion and engendered controversy.<sup>62</sup> Herskovits discovered that both his anatomical measurements and his genealogies indicated that most African Americans had a mixed racial background. His data disclosed a much greater degree of European and American Indian heritage than that indicated by previous measures and contradicted U.S. Census figures that had reported that less than a fifth of African Americans were mulattoes.<sup>63</sup> Herskovits's conclusion was supported by the discovery of large variations in skin color among his subjects. For example, he found a large color variation between siblings among the students he measured at Public School 89 in Harlem. Herskovits argued that this must be the result of parents and grandparents with significant skin color variations, indicating a mixed racial heritage.<sup>64</sup>

Herskovits initially concluded that only 20 percent of American Negroes were "pure Negro" based on his Howard University research, but he later revised this figure upward to about 30 percent. He reasoned that "there is a social selection on the basis of color (I do not believe it extends to the other Negroid traits) which makes for somewhat lighter men on the average who take higher education."<sup>65</sup> After tabulating all his genealogies, Herskovits found that 22 percent of his subjects claimed "pure Negro" ancestry.<sup>66</sup> Based on his findings among Howard University students that less than 1 percent had a white parent and not many more had a white grandparent, Herskovits concluded that the race mixing had occurred several generations earlier.<sup>67</sup> The lack of recent race mixing between whites and blacks was due to the fact that "the Negro community, as well as the White, frowns upon interracial matings."<sup>68</sup>

Although he had expected to find great variations in his measurements of physical traits among the mixed-race Negroes, Herskovits found just the opposite. Indeed, his discovery of low physical variability (besides

skin color) provided him with an even more powerful critique of the race concept. Most traditional anthropologists and biologists believed that the physical traits of the individuals within a racial group varied much less than those of individuals born to parents of different races. This was based on the belief that “racial” characteristics had a genetic basis and that a particular physical trait corresponded directly with a particular gene. According to this view, great variation in the racial heritage, and therefore the genes, of parents would lead to great variation in the physical traits of the children. But Herskovits found that African Americans, who were a predominantly mixed racial group, demonstrated low physical trait variability. He explained this apparent anomaly by arguing that, contrary to the traditionalists’ view, physical traits did not correspond directly to particular genes. Instead, Herskovits embraced the emerging view of geneticists, who were beginning to demonstrate that there was a more complex relationship between genotype and phenotype.<sup>69</sup> This conclusion undercut one of the principal supports for the race concept. If genotype did not correspond directly with phenotype, then the biological significance of race as defined by visible physical traits was diminished. What’s more, Herskovits argued that low physical variability among African Americans did not indicate the formation of a new race. Rather, he questioned the usefulness of the race concept in general. If race was defined as a group with similar physical traits and if a group that was proven to be of mixed racial origin demonstrated physical homogeneity, then racial categories (defined in biological terms) were rendered meaningless.<sup>70</sup>

Herskovits, however, was not ready to reject the significance of physical traits as a basis for categorizing humanity. Explaining the physical homogeneity of African Americans as a result of “inbreeding among mulattos,” Herskovits pointed to “the development of a new type different from Negro and from White, in the process of becoming.”<sup>71</sup> Based on the combination of racial mixing and low variability, Herskovits decided to call American Negroes a “homogeneous population group.”<sup>72</sup> He proposed “that we shall have to reserve the term Negro for such persons as are of full Negro ancestry and use some such term as ‘not-White’ to describe the material with which we are working. I always use ‘Colored’, which I think fits nicely.”<sup>73</sup> By endorsing the practice of categorizing African Americans based on physical characteristics, Herskovits inadvertently gave support to those who would interpret his findings as evidence of the formation of a new race.

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In the context of racist views of mulatto infertility or biological degeneracy, however, Herskovits's characterization of African Americans as a distinct or homogeneous population group or type represented an anti-racist position. Census data that indicated that mulattoes represented a declining proportion of African Americans could be used as evidence of the racist position. Herskovits's findings that most black Americans had a mixed racial heritage and constituted a stable physical type — one with low physical variability — refuted the racist position.

Although Herskovits's subjects were from only a few select regions — New York, Washington DC, and West Virginia — he believed that his conclusions would hold for the general African American population. This belief was based in part on the fact that the New York children whom he measured came from all over the American South and the West Indies.<sup>74</sup> In addition, in January 1927 Herskovits discovered that an anthropometric study of black women at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama confirmed his results.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, Boas advised Herskovits that more evidence was needed in order to conclude that his results were generally true of African Americans.<sup>76</sup> Boas told Herskovits in early 1928 that although he was inclined to accept Herskovits's conclusions, Herskovits needed to continue the research in Alabama and Louisiana to confirm his findings.<sup>77</sup> Boas also cautioned his former student about overstating his conclusion: "I do not think you have a right to claim more than that the American Negro has not as high a variability as might be suspected on account of the very great differences of the amount of white and negro blood in the various groupings."<sup>78</sup> Herskovits accepted his mentor's advice and wrote a conservative conclusion to *The Anthropometry of the Negro*, the technical and statistical statement of his study directed to an academic audience. In this work, he characterized the new physical type of American Negroes as "a relatively homogeneous one."<sup>79</sup>

Meanwhile, Herskovits sought to address Boas's admonitions and criticisms by others that he did not have enough evidence to support his conclusion that African Americans were forming a new physical type. He moved to provide more evidence from the Deep South. In December 1929 Herskovits received funding from the NRC to send a black student, Vivian Cameron, to Mississippi to do anthropometrical measurements and record genealogies.<sup>80</sup> After analyzing Cameron's measurements of 171 families, including 639 males and females, Herskovits reported that "it appears that this 'Black Belt' population is no more negroid than that measured by me in the North during my earlier research."<sup>81</sup> He con-

cluded that there were no significant regional differences between northern and southern blacks. There were, however, some traits that did differ significantly: skin color (attributed to Mississippians working in the sun), head width and cephalic index, upper facial height, and, for women only, nose width. These last three were biologically unexplainable, so Herskovits assumed that there was probably an environmental explanation. This study also confirmed Herskovits's earlier conclusion that African Americans were becoming a homogeneous population. By disregarding the statistics that did not accord with his desired conclusion, however, Herskovits did what many of the racist physical anthropologists had previously done, reject or rationalize evidence that contradicted their theories.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Herskovits's argument that his conclusions could be generalized to describe all American blacks was undercut because he could not ensure that the samples of white Americans and Africans (measured by others) used for comparison purposes were representative.<sup>83</sup>

During the late 1940s August Meier, a young history professor at Tougaloo College in Mississippi, conducted a genealogical study of his black students that confirmed the results of Herskovits's study. In fact, Meier's genealogies of Tougaloo students indicated an even lower percentage of those with unmixed African descent than had Herskovits's earlier study. The one major difference was that the Tougaloo students indicated a much larger degree of American Indian heritage, 72 percent compared to 27 percent in the Herskovits study. This difference was attributed to the different regions studied by Herskovits and Meier.<sup>84</sup>

Meier expanded his research into other area schools and, with Herskovits's help, published "A Study of the Racial Ancestry of the Mississippi College Negro" in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*. Meier surveyed 1,479 students from Tougaloo College, Campbell College, Jackson State Teachers College, Southern Christian Institute, and Alcorn A&M College in Mississippi; Dillard University in New Orleans; and LeMoyné College in Memphis, Tennessee. Meier's results once again confirmed Herskovits's conclusion that only a small minority of African Americans were of unmixed African ancestry. The fact that Meier's 1947–48 study indicated that more blacks had mixed ancestry than Herskovits found in 1928 affirmed Herskovits's prediction of twenty years earlier that as mixed Negroes married unmixed Negroes, there would be fewer Negroes without mixed ancestry.<sup>85</sup>

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Herskovits offered a cultural explanation for the development of African Americans into a predominantly mixed-race group with a low degree of physical variability.<sup>86</sup> He postulated that darker-skinned men choosing lighter-skinned women as wives caused the homogeneity of the mixed group. Herskovits explained that this dynamic was due to the prestige of marrying light-colored women, based on Negroes' acceptance of the values of the mainstream American population with respect to skin color. Herskovits first noticed this convention when he observed that the skin color of the fathers of the Howard students, based on the genealogies, was generally darker than that of the mothers.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Herskovits believed that as darker-skinned men and lighter-skinned women married, an even more homogeneous group would form.<sup>88</sup>

The reaction to *The American Negro* revealed the different perspectives of various individuals and groups involved in the debate on race. Traditionalists, who viewed race as a category fixed in nature, either attacked Herskovits's characterization of American Negroes as a "homogeneous population group" or misinterpreted it to fit their own preconceptions. They asserted that Herskovits's research indicated that African Americans were a distinct race despite Herskovits's specific statement in his book that African Americans represented a homogeneous population type rather than a race. Charles B. Davenport, cofounder of the eugenicist Galton Society, rejected Herskovits's distinction between a homogeneous population group and a race. Based on his definition of race as "a homogeneous group that is more or less distinctly cut off from other groups," Davenport asserted that there was no difference between a race and a homogeneous group. Therefore American Negroes were a new race.<sup>89</sup> Anatomist Robert Bennett Bean of Johns Hopkins University similarly misinterpreted Herskovits's conclusion, insisting that Herskovits had declared the "formation of a new racial entity, the American negro."<sup>90</sup>

Herskovits's attempt to undermine stereotypes about black sexual promiscuity, though well intentioned, proved unconvincing to his traditionalist critics. In fact, his findings revealed that Negro genealogies were closely correlated with the measurements and thus refuted the popular and racist notion that Negro genealogies were invalid.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, traditionalist scholars rejected Herskovits's validation of the genealogies. Robert Bennett Bean attacked Herskovits's use of genealogical information. Bean based his attack on his personal experiences as a Vir-

ginian, where he claimed that due to widespread black promiscuity, Negroes rarely knew who their father was.<sup>92</sup> Psychologist Joseph Peterson also rejected the accuracy of the genealogies based on his view that the subjects had no direct knowledge of their ancestry. He asserted that the subjects fabricated a genealogy that fit their own physical traits.<sup>93</sup>

Unlike the traditionalists, forward-looking scholars wrote decidedly positive reviews of Herskovits's work. Wingate Todd, for instance, lauded the clear demonstration of the increasing homogeneity of Negroes.<sup>94</sup> Another reviewer called *The American Negro* "a brilliant piece of work."<sup>95</sup> Similarly, Du Bois showered the book and its author with praise.<sup>96</sup> Du Bois pronounced Herskovits a "real scientist" and called the book "epoch-making." Herskovits, he continued, "proves that the American Negro is a new definite group. All of that nonsense fostered by the United States Census as to mulattos is swept away."<sup>97</sup> For Du Bois, Herskovits's conclusion that a majority of African Americans were of mixed heritage discredited the racist notion that mulattoes were disappearing due to their supposed biological degeneracy or infertility. In addition, Du Bois's interest in fostering racial and cultural pride predisposed him to favor Herskovits's finding that American blacks were a definite group. Nonetheless, Herskovits, an outspoken assimilationist at the time, sought to downplay the cultural differences between blacks and whites.

Although the main results of his study weakened the notion of race as a fixed biological category, Herskovits's use of a biometric methodology inadvertently reinforced a biologically based race concept. Carter Woodson's brief review of *The American Negro* demonstrated his awareness of the regressive impact of Herskovits's approach. Unlike the conservative critics who accepted Herskovits's methodology but rejected his conclusions, Woodson attacked Herskovits for his use of anthropometry. He called *The American Negro* "a brief and incomplete treatment" by an inexperienced scholar. Woodson argued that Herskovits raised the same questions that psychologists and anthropologists had been raising for years as they continued to study the "Negro physiologically." Woodson continued, "The whole effort seems to have been to prove that the Negro is inferior to the whites, but so far the only thing that we have is the evidence of differences in progress due to environment and opportunity. Science supports the claim that races are very much alike and that if similarly circumstanced they will give practically the same account of



their stewardship.”<sup>98</sup> In Woodson’s mind, Herskovits’s physiological approach supported the racist assumptions of traditional anthropologists. Forward-thinking social scientists, according to Woodson, should be adopting an environmental approach to cultural differences.

Woodson had a point. Herskovits’s secondary results from his physical anthropology work revealed that his approach did highlight physiological differences between blacks and whites. In April 1924, for instance, Herskovits read a paper at the annual meeting of Woodson’s Association for the Study of Negro Life and History based on his measurements of students at Public School 89 in Harlem. Herskovits concluded that greatest nose width and greatest lip thickness were strongly correlated with greatest standing height, head length, facial width, finger length, hand width, and sitting height. The significance of this correlation was that the various measurements could then be correlated with race. Nevertheless, by stressing physical traits and ignoring environmental influence, Herskovits unwittingly strengthened the biologically based race concept.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, Herskovits’s 1924 article on the physical growth of black youth may have provided ammunition for those still supporting the sanctity of the biological race concept. After comparing his measurements of the students at Public School 89, records of children at the Colored Orphan Asylum in Riverdale, New York, and other studies of black and white youth, Herskovits concluded, “Colored boys grow faster in height and weight to the 16th year than White boys.” The adolescent growth spurt occurred one year earlier for the “Colored boys,” despite their lower economic status.<sup>100</sup> He also reported that white children grew more slowly than black children did, with the corresponding difference less for those African Americans with more European heritage. Although Herskovits’s stated goal was to determine to what degree environment and racial mixture affected the physical development of the children, he did not stress the environmental influence.<sup>101</sup> By emphasizing physiological differences between whites and blacks, Herskovits again reinforced a biological approach. In addition, his publication of articles on head width, head length, and interpupillary distance lent support for a continued biological emphasis in race study. By continued use of these physical traits for classification purposes, Herskovits unintentionally reinforced the race concept.<sup>102</sup>

Nonetheless, he viewed Woodson’s attack as personal. Herskovits told

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Alain Locke, “Thanks for sending me Woodson’s review of my book. He is in his usual form—I thought he would take it harder than a mere patting on the head. I must confess that I rather resent the assertion that I have been prejudiced in my work. I did not think that any one would say that and I am telling him so in no uncertain terms by this mail.”<sup>103</sup>

Herskovits did write Woodson, questioning whether Woodson had even read the book and defending himself against the charges of prejudice, noting that he did not discuss mental capacity in the book. Associating himself with Boas, whom he assumed had Woodson’s respect, he challenged Woodson, “May I ask if you feel that he [Boas] also is trying to prove inferiority of the Negro?”<sup>104</sup>

Unlike Woodson, prominent black sociologists E. Franklin Frazier and Charles S. Johnson focused their criticism on the social selection explanation for the development of a homogeneous population group among American Negroes. Frazier and Johnson rejected Herskovits’s argument that dark-skinned black men married light-skinned black women for increased social prestige.<sup>105</sup> In a generally unfavorable review, Frazier argued that Herskovits’s sample was not representative of the general black population because the Harlem and Howard populations had an unusually large mulatto group. Furthermore, Frazier regarded Herskovits’s claim that darker-complexioned men married lighter women as simplistic, failing to take into account other sociological distinctions such as family tradition and wealth.<sup>106</sup>

Herskovits’s detection of the formation of a new physical type among American Negroes coincided with a similar recognition among blacks themselves.<sup>107</sup> A 1941 survey conducted by Charles S. Johnson indicated that blacks idealized the brown color. Joel Williamson has argued that this glorification of “brownness . . . achieved a popular consumption in 1936 when boxer Joe Louis became the heavyweight champion of the world and was proudly dubbed ‘the Brown Bomber.’”<sup>108</sup>

Unfortunately, several academics and popular writers began to disseminate a distorted version of Herskovits’s findings to a wide audience during the 1930s.<sup>109</sup> These writers misinterpreted Herskovits’s conclusions and strengthened the notion that American Negroes formed a distinct racial group. In 1931 Edwin Embree, president of the Rosenwald Foundation, published *Brown America: The Story of a New Race*. Based in large part on the results of Herskovits’s study, Embree announced the formation of a new brown-skinned race that represented

the mixing of African, European, and American Indian ancestors.<sup>110</sup> While he applauded *Brown America* for its “liberal attitude toward Negroes,” Herskovits criticized Embree’s “tendency to speak of the American Negro as a brown race.” Moreover, Herskovits felt “rather responsible for it since Mr. Embree’s use of the term is obviously based on my own work.” Herskovits regretted that his study, which should have undermined the efficacy of the race concept, might extend its use. Herskovits insisted, “In my own book I very carefully stated that the Negro was forming a ‘type’” and not a race.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly, in his forthcoming book on racial and ethnic groups, T. J. Woofter Jr. of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill cited Herskovits for the idea that American Negroes were “biologically and culturally . . . developing a new ‘brown’ race.” After reading a draft of Woofter’s work in 1933, Herskovits told him that although Embree used the phrase “brown race,” he wanted to dissuade people from calling American Negroes a new race. Herskovits reasserted his conclusion that African Americans formed a “homogeneous population group,” not a race.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to influencing scholarly and public discourse on race mixing, Herskovits published a series of articles during the 1920s that helped undermine the use of personality and intelligence tests to degrade African Americans. In the initial prospectus for his study of race crossing, Herskovits planned to test the notion that race was correlated with intelligence and temperament. Racist anthropologists argued that temperament and intelligence varied across racial lines and contributed to behavioral differences.<sup>113</sup> Although Herskovits did do some research in these areas, they were not addressed in the two books published from his study. Instead, Herskovits published his findings that discredited the relationship between race, temperament, and intelligence in separate articles.<sup>114</sup>

Herskovits had considered giving the Downey Will-Temperament Test (“the most popular personality test of the 1920s”) to racially mixed groups and black groups to test the correlation between certain character traits—that were considered strong correlates to temperament—and race.<sup>115</sup> June Downey, the creator of the test, claimed that her test measured one’s temperament, which she defined as one’s “innate relatively permanent disposition.” The test required participants to perform twelve handwriting tasks.<sup>116</sup> Then the results were evaluated by analyzing the

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participants' handwriting for such characteristics as speed of movement, speed of decision, and noncompliance. Before deciding on whether to use the test, Herskovits executed a trial run by giving the test to three groups of his own acquaintances. Each individual was judged on certain character traits. Herskovits discovered that trait evaluations were very subjective and depended on the evaluator's interpretation of the test's definitions of the traits being measured. As a result, the correlation between individual traits was very low. Based on this trial run, Herskovits concluded that "great caution should be exercised in the use of this test" and decided against using it. In 1924 Herskovits published an article in which he rejected the Downey Will-Temperament Test as unreliable. In rejecting this particular test, Herskovits implied that temperament was not a statistically measurable quality, making it futile to try to correlate race and temperament.<sup>117</sup> Herskovits's article contributed to the general abandonment of the Downey Will-Temperament Test by other researchers.<sup>118</sup>

Herskovits also published articles that challenged the prevailing view that race was closely correlated with intelligence. This view had been given a large boost by the army's IQ tests administered to over 1.5 million recruits during World War I. Psychologist Carl Brigham's 1923 study of the army's tests, *A Study of American Intelligence*, concluded that the Nordic (northern Europeans) race was intellectually superior to the Alpine and Mediterranean (southern Europeans) races. Brigham also maintained that American Negroes were intellectually inferior to whites.<sup>119</sup>

A distinct minority, led by Boas and his students, challenged the conclusions reached by the racist interpreters of the army tests. In 1923 Alfred Kroeber observed that the test results contradicted the racial inferiority of black Americans, as northern blacks had scored higher than southern whites.<sup>120</sup> In 1926, based on her master's thesis that focused on intelligence tests and Italian American children, Margaret Mead concluded that intelligence tests were suspect because they ignored differences in language, education, socioeconomic status, and culture between participants of different races or nationalities.<sup>121</sup> During the early 1930s psychologist Otto Klineberg found that differing test results among northern blacks, southern blacks, northern whites, and southern whites were due to environmental factors and not to selective migration of more

intelligent blacks to the North. The North proved to be a “more favorable environment” to educational achievement.<sup>122</sup>

Herskovits joined his fellow Boasians in attacking the intelligence tests. In 1924, in an article for the *American Mercury*, Herskovits attacked Brigham’s *Study of American Intelligence* for using head form as the basis for categorizing individuals as Nordic, as Mediterranean, or as members of other “races.” Herskovits rejected the validity of Brigham’s use of head form based on Boas’s studies that demonstrated the environmental impact on head form. Moreover, Herskovits explained that the large variations in physical characteristics within a race led to great difficulty in racial categorization.<sup>123</sup> The following year Herskovits rejected the argument that the intelligence tests demonstrated racial differences. Citing Mead’s research, Herskovits asserted that the key variables in test results were due to environmental influences such as language acquisition, length of time in the United States, and social status. He also pointed out that the tests were culturally biased when they used such images as a tennis court, which would be unknown to many immigrants. Based on his own research, Herskovits also rejected a racial analysis when comparing whites and Negroes, as American Negroes represented a mixed-racial group. He explained, “The very term ‘Negro’ is social rather than racial . . . [as in the United States it] means . . . ‘not-all-white.’”<sup>124</sup>

In his physical anthropology study, Herskovits compared genealogies and biometric measurements on Howard University students with their scores on the Thorndike College Entrance Examination. He reviewed previous studies that almost universally concluded that blacks scored lower than whites on intelligence tests. Herskovits then reviewed the scores of African Americans of various mixtures of European and African descent and correlated the test scores of more than a hundred Howard students with physical traits such as lip thickness, skin color, and nose width. He found an extremely low correlation between intelligence and degree of white ancestry, based on the physical measurements. For each trait, the correlation was less than .2, and some were close to zero.<sup>125</sup> Herskovits concluded “that the relationship between test scores and physical traits denoting greater or less amounts of Negro blood is so tenuous as to be of no value in drawing conclusions as to the comparative native ability or relative intelligence of the Negro when compared to the White.”<sup>126</sup> In reporting no significant correlation between race and test scores, this article contributed to the argument against a hierarchy of

intelligence based on race. Moreover, this 1926 article preceded the publication of Klineberg's conclusions.<sup>127</sup>

In 1927 Herskovits published a pamphlet on the same subject entitled *The Negro and the Intelligence Tests*. He argued that intelligence tests and psychological tests were culturally biased because the test-makers were white, and thus nonwhite test-takers were at a disadvantage. Herskovits maintained that these tests should be closely scrutinized before their results could be accepted as proof of the innate superiority of one group over another. He asserted that attempts to compare the intelligence of white Americans and black Americans were flawed by misguided assumptions. Contrary to the general belief, African Americans could not be characterized as a biological entity, since they represented a mixture of European and African heritage. In addition, Herskovits argued that the results of intelligence tests did not control for environmental variables such as "barriers of inferior opportunity, the tradition of social degradation, and the historical background of slavery."<sup>128</sup> This argument indicated that Herskovits was shifting the discourse from a focus on race and biological factors to an emphasis on culture and environmental factors.

Herskovits's exclusion of his research on psychological tests from his monograph *The American Negro*, however, led some critics to claim that his book did nothing to countermand their claims for white superiority. For instance, psychologist Joseph Peterson claimed that Herskovits's findings did not disprove the hypothesis that with more European heritage there was a higher level of intelligence and also did not contradict psychological findings of race differences.<sup>129</sup> In December 1928 Herskovits defended his conclusion that there was no correlation between test scores and the race mixture of Howard University students from an attack by University of Minnesota psychologists. Herskovits maintained that the psychologists were "not correct in assuming that greater selection has operated to bring a larger percentage of persons with large amounts of Negro blood to Howard than would be found in the general community. Of course, there is no doubt but that there are handicaps for the darker men wherever they go, as compared to those which the lighter must face. This is true with situations involving White and Negro, and Negro and Negro. But it was found at Howard that the result is that the darker students do the best work!"<sup>130</sup>

In the years following the publication of *The American Negro*, Herskovits sought to ensure that his work was properly understood as an attack

on a biologically based race concept. He used his newfound status as an authority on race and physical anthropology to publicize his conclusions and to reproach those who professed to have found scientific proof of racial inferiority or superiority.<sup>131</sup> In 1929 Herskovits advised the Rosenwald Foundation of the inadequacies of psychologist Joseph Peterson's anthropometry study, which concluded "evidence points to a difference in native intellectual ability favoring the whites." Herskovits rejected Peterson's use of psychological tests as a valid measure of intelligence and attacked Peterson's methodology, maintaining that the practice of multiplying "the head by its width" was "entirely meaningless." He continued, "to correlate psychological tests with head sizes, height and width, means nothing . . . from the point of view of any light which may be turned on race differences." At the same time, Herskovits argued that Peterson's use of the von Luschan scale to measure skin color was "indefensible."<sup>132</sup> Anthropologist Paul Bohannon later described the von Luschan method as follows: "The anthropologist got out his pack of cards, and then caught a subject. He made him take off his shirt (if he had one on) and lift his arm, because he wanted a patch of skin where the sun had never shone. He ran the cards along the patch of skin until he found a match—when the color of the skin through the quarter-sized hole was the same as that on the printed card surrounding it. That gave him a number that he wrote down. When he got all the subjects measured, he added up the numbers, divided by the number of subjects, and got what can only be called a 'mean shade.'" The main problem was that there was rarely any agreement on which color matched the card, and different judges would come to different conclusions.<sup>133</sup>

In 1930 Herskovits's entry for "Race Mixture" in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* expressed the Boasian view of race, maintaining that there were no biologically pure races due to the historical process of race mixing over many thousands of years. This result was demonstrated by the large variations in physical traits within particular races.<sup>134</sup> After a review of the major studies of race crossing, Herskovits concluded, as his own study did, that simple Mendelian heredity (the direct correspondence between a gene and a physical trait) did not hold because the hybrid groups were more homogeneous than the parent groups, just the opposite of what would be expected. Thus if the hybrid groups were more homogeneous than the parent groups, homogeneity could not be, as previously thought, "an index of racial purity." Herskovits inferred

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that this might be the same “process by means of which the present day ‘pure’ races may have attained their homogeneity after an original cross or series of crosses.”<sup>135</sup> Herskovits also rejected the arguments for inferior reproductive vigor of hybrids or inferior intellectual evaluations of hybrids compared to “pure” races. Instead, he maintained that “it is more satisfactory to regard the social behavior of hybrid populations as reflections of their cultural milieu than to refer the matter to biological causes.”<sup>136</sup>

Herskovits also used his status as an authority on race to publicize the notion that race was a sociological concept, not a biological concept. In 1940 Herskovits was asked to arbitrate a case of questionable race identity of a child with a white mother and an unknown father for the Council of Jewish Women of Los Angeles. The agency wanted the child to be raised within its race and was concerned that she might bear black children if she had some African heritage.<sup>137</sup> Herskovits explained that the American “concept ‘Negro’ . . . is a sociological rather than a biological one, since we term anyone a Negro who has any proportion of African ancestry.” Consequently, he advised the agency that “there would be little danger of its later having a ‘black baby’ if she married a white man. . . . There is no indication that Negroidness, so to speak, is inherited as a unit character. . . . Certainly, there are no tests that will give you conclusive evidence of the racial affiliations of the child.” Herskovits recommended that the child should be raised where she was wanted, in this case with the mother and the mother’s parents.<sup>138</sup>

Similarly, in February 1946, in response to a layperson’s inquiry, Herskovits said, “Race itself, I may say, is a scientific fiction whose usefulness is merely to permit the classification of human types in furthering scientific analysis. All human beings belong to the same species, and what gives an individual, whatever his race, his innate endowment, is the quality of his own ancestry without any reference to its racial affiliation.”<sup>139</sup>

As a mature scholar, Herskovits continued to attack the use of intelligence tests to determine innate intelligence. In March 1946 Herskovits advised Theodor Monod, Institut Francais d’Afrique Noire, Dakar, Senegal, French West Africa, against the use of “the so-called ‘intelligence tests,’” as American psychologists accepted the fact that these tests measured experience more than innate intelligence and thus “cannot be employed across cultural lines. . . . [T]he application of these tests to the



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Negroes of the United States has resulted only in the perpetuation of prejudice and the rationalization of injustice.”<sup>140</sup>

During the Second World War Herskovits attacked racism and prejudice at public events. As a participant in a panel at the 1945 Chicago Conference on Home Front Unity, held under the auspices of the Mayor’s Committee on Race Relations, Herskovits read a paper entitled “The Myths of Prejudice.” In it, Herskovits attacked Madison Grant, author of *The Passing of the Great Race*, and Lothrop Stoddard, author of *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Underman*, as American purveyors of “pseudo-scientific racism.” Defining racism as “[t]he distortion of scientific fact concerning race differences for political ends,” Herskovits bemoaned the damage done by “racists [who] go on shouting that races are linguistic, cultural, national groupings gifted with innate endowments that are variously described so as to fit the purpose in hand.” He also attacked the World War I psychological tests as “another sanction for American racism. . . . [T]hey have been used again and again to prove Nordic superiority?” Herskovits then explained that these tests were often used by the Nazis to support their racist theories. He concluded by insisting that racist thought must be “fought.” He asserted that America’s ideals would prevail “if we look to the truth, balance the things men have in common against those that differentiate them in the scale of science, and act to implement the human equalities that are to be read in that scale.”<sup>141</sup>

In 1956 Herskovits challenged a published statement by C. J. McGurk, a Villanova psychologist, that “Negroes as a group do not possess [as great a capacity for education] as whites as a group.” Herskovits once again maintained that intelligence tests measured experience. Moreover, he argued that as American Negroes were mostly a mixed racial group and that no correlation had ever been demonstrated between percentage of white ancestry and achievement given equal education, racial generalizations were unacceptable.<sup>142</sup>

Partially influenced by Wingate Todd, and also by his first field trip during the summer of 1928 to Suriname, Herskovits began to question the efficacy of anthropometry. In late 1929 Todd suggested to Herskovits his desire to “eliminate anthropometric measurements altogether. . . . I believe an expert, thoroughly trained in making observations and notes in the field with what photographs he can get, should be able to give

us enough data to make an adequate anthropological analysis of the people.” Todd maintained that his own studies indicated “no distinctions between White and Negro” in “such things as growth patterns.” This view ran counter to Herskovits’s own findings.<sup>143</sup> Agreeing with Todd’s position, Herskovits responded, “I am not so sure but that much of our despair over this word ‘race’ is not due to the fact that we are quite at a loss to reconcile the physical measurements which I am coming more and more to feel have little to do with reality and the observational criteria of physical differences.”<sup>144</sup>

Herskovits sought to convince physical anthropologists to abandon both their emphases on race categorization and their efforts at relating race to behavior or intellect. In 1936 he lamented the continuing focus on race and behavior of the Harvard physical anthropologists, especially Earnest Hooton. Hooton was then working on an extensive study relating race and criminality, which would be published in 1939. Herskovits told Todd that he “would like to see anthropometry conceived not only in the conventional terms of race, and not only in terms of analyses of growth patterns, but also as the study of the processes of heredity as manifested in human family lines. One of the reasons I feel that the work at Harvard is so weak is because of these three fields of physical anthropology, — which I regard as the primary ones in our discipline, — only the first, the taxonomic aspect is given any attention at all.”<sup>145</sup>

Despite Herskovits’s critique of physical anthropology, as late as 1943 most physical anthropologists continued to focus on categorizing race and relating race to behavior. Congratulating Herskovits on his article on Boas’s contributions to physical anthropology following Boas’s death, anthropologist Leslie Spier lamented the fact that so few physical anthropologists accorded with Boas’s point of view. They refused to “give up their dearly-beloved concepts of the fixed inheritance of physical form and of pure races.”<sup>146</sup> The fact that the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* did not even run an obituary for Boas reflected the deep divide among anthropologists.<sup>147</sup>

The race idea had such a powerful hold on even Herskovits that it limited his willingness to reject completely the use of race as a concept based on phenotype. In 1927, the same year he had written his denunciation of intelligence tests as a measure of innate racial intelligence, Herskovits maintained that racial superiority or inferiority doctrines “may be true; or they may not. Certainly neither position has been conclusively

established as yet.”<sup>148</sup> This statement paralleled Boas’s position. Although Boas attacked racist literature and denied the existence of pure races, his general position on racial intelligence was that there was no conclusive proof that any race was superior to another. Nevertheless, Boas occasionally placed blacks as inferior to whites. For example, in *Anthropology and Modern Life* (1928) Boas said that “there were ‘no pure races’” but maintained that “serially the Negro brain is less extremely human than that of the White,” because a higher percentage of European people had a higher brain weight than the Negro population.<sup>149</sup> Although Herskovits never made statements supporting a racial hierarchy, he did caution against “dogmatic assumptions as to the existence or non-existence of racial differences in aptitudes, in intelligence, in special cultural tendencies.” At the same time, he rejected the idea of associating physical type with cultural limitations because any person, regardless of racial or physical type, had the ability to adopt another culture.<sup>150</sup>

As late as 1949, in a contribution to a four-volume work on Jewish history, culture, and religion entitled “Who Are the Jews?” Herskovits, in rejecting a racial identity for Jews, did so by employing outmoded classification methods. He discussed the anthropometric problem with respect to Jews whereby Ashkenazic (central and eastern European) Jews had undergone “‘brachycephalization’ . . . that is, their conversion from a long-headed Mediterranean type to a short-headed form that characterizes the Alpine subrace of Causcasoids.” Thus Spanish Jews had longer heads than Russian Jews. According to Herskovits, this variation in cephalic index, along with blood type variations, between Ashkenazic and Sephardic (Spanish) Jews meant that the idea that the Jews were a race had to be rejected as untenable. In addition, comparisons of head form between Jews and non-Jews in central Europe showed similarities by locality, not religion, confirming a nonracial categorization.<sup>151</sup> Here Herskovits, while rejecting the racial categorization for Jews, accepted the discredited use of long-headedness and short-headedness as determinants of racial category. Curiously, in the same article Herskovits denied the significance of race, arguing that “it is studies of local types, population formations, stability of physical traits under crossing and the plasticity of the organism under different environmental conditions that come to have meaning and lead to significant results for the study of human biology.”<sup>152</sup>

As a mature scholar Herskovits’s views on race were spelled out clearly

in one of his major works, his 1947 publication, *Man and His Works: The Science of Cultural Anthropology*.<sup>153</sup> Chapter 9 of *Man and His Works*, called “Physical Type and Culture,” began with the question, “What is a race?” Although at the outset Herskovits noted that anthropologists differed greatly over definitions of race and how to apply them, he refused to reject the traditional use of the concept to divide humanity. Herskovits wrote, “Common usage dies hard, however, and the word race has been employed for so long a time to designate the larger groupings that it would be confusing to change it here. Therefore, in our discussion we shall, in the conventional manner, call the principal types of mankind races and use the term sub-race to designate the subordinate aggregates.”<sup>154</sup>

Herskovits then noted the shortcomings of categorizing humans by physical traits: “[T]he outstanding factor in the study of physical types is *variability*. . . . [T]he phenomenon of *overlapping* bulks large in the study of racial differences. . . . [T]he differences between . . . races — are differences of detail.” For example, Herskovits noted that many narrow-nosed Swedes had broader nostrils than those of the generally broader-nosed Kajji of the Niger Delta in West Africa.<sup>155</sup> Because this type of overlapping was the rule and not the exception, Herskovits concluded “that *greater differences exist in the range of physical traits that characterize any single race of mankind, than between races taken in their entirety*.”<sup>156</sup> At this point one might expect Herskovits to reject the concept of race, but instead he argued that because there were “perceptibly different manifestations of the same traits . . . it would merely be a denial of objective reality to ignore the existence of these differences.” Thus “races . . . must be recognized for what they are — categories based on outer appearance as reflected in scientific measurements or observations that permit us to make convenient classifications of human materials.” This classification then “is an important initial step in assessing the biological nature of man and the relationship this aspect holds to his culture-building tendencies.”<sup>157</sup> Herskovits then listed the three races — Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid — and their subraces. He maintained that race studies required studies of genetics, concluding that due to “interbreeding of populations” there were no pure races. Moreover, Herskovits noted, “From a genetic point of view . . . a race is to be viewed . . . as a series of *family lines*.” These family lines produced individuals who “resemble each other to the degree that they were the product of similar genetic strains.” This

group—which Herskovits called a population—rather than a race, was the proper subject of analysis. Thus Herskovits discussed variation in two ways: the old, focusing on external physical traits using the concept of race, and the new, focusing on genetics and family lines and populations.<sup>158</sup>

The compelling question was whether all this information on physical differences, differences among populations, races, and racial intermixing served any scientific purpose. Although Boas and Herskovits used biometric technique to challenge those who employed pseudoscientific techniques to “prove” racial superiority or inferiority, at the same time they validated the continued emphasis on race and physical differences for purposes of scientific analysis.

If we compare the chapter on race in *Man and His Works* with the corresponding chapter in a 1963 textbook by Paul Bohannon, we can see Herskovits still rooted in the traditional discourse though pushing hard against those roots, while Bohannon’s more modern treatment rejects phenotype as a useful scientific category.<sup>159</sup> Writing about fifteen years after Herskovits, in a chapter appropriately called “The Chimera of Race,” Bohannon sought to shatter the whole paradigm of analyzing physical differences and rejected the idea that race was a useful concept for biology or science, although it remained a useful sociological concept. Bohannon argued that unless race could be employed as a useful category for scientific research, it should be rejected.<sup>160</sup> The “genetics revolution in racial theory” changed the focus from phenotypes (external characteristics) to genotypes (genetic makeup). Bohannon maintained that as the anthropometric measurement of various physical traits was irrelevant to a biological classification, they were useless.<sup>161</sup>

Herskovits, along with some other physical anthropologists of the 1930s and 1940s, did reject the notion of a pure race based on trait clusters. Other physical anthropologists, even after making this determination, continued their research on racial categories. Herskovits spent the next thirty-five years studying culture, though occasionally dabbling in anthropometry, because he probably realized that there was nowhere to go with an analysis of physical characteristics with little scientific relevance. As Bohannon pointed out, scientists interested in biological influence on human traits, after the genetics revolution, would be geneticists, but Herskovits and others preceded this transformation.<sup>162</sup>

Herskovits tried to have it both ways. He wanted to continue the tra-

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ditional biometric methods of physical anthropologists and also move into the future by embracing a more complex relationship between phenotype and genotype. But without an understanding of genetics, he was unwilling to reject the traditional methodology. Thus, as a physical anthropologist, Herskovits was a transitional figure among anthropologists interpreting race, moving toward the future but also stuck in the past. Nevertheless, as he returned to his earlier interest—cultural anthropology—he would make even stronger contributions to undermining notions of racial hierarchy, as his scholarship attacked notions of cultural as well as racial inequality.



## Transforming the Debate on Black Culture

If a person stirs up a hole,  
he will find what is in it.  
— Suriname Maroon proverb

**W**ITH THE COMPLETION of his physical anthropology study, Herskovits undertook a series of acculturation studies that helped transform the debate on American cultural identity. Stimulated by his work on American blacks, he formulated a plan to study the cultures of diasporic Africans. This plan led to fifteen years of fieldwork in Africa and the Americas that challenged both academic and popular views on black culture. Herskovits launched this fieldwork from his new home in Evanston, Illinois, following his hiring by Northwestern University as its first anthropology professor in 1927.<sup>1</sup>

Herskovits's fieldwork in Suriname, Dahomey, Haiti, Trinidad, and Brazil compelled him to repudiate his assimilationist perspective. Initially arguing that African culture had no influence on African American culture, by 1930 Herskovits concluded that black cultures throughout the Americas were strongly influenced by African cultures. Moreover, he demonstrated the dynamism and complexity of African and African American cultures at a time when most Americans accepted the notion of black inferiority. Meanwhile, by convincing anthropologists to accept acculturation studies as a vital part of the discipline, Herskovits laid the foundation for a dynamic view of cultural change that emphasized cultural diversity. In his study of the physical anthropology of black Americans, he had helped undermine Victorian certainties about a fixed racial hierarchy. With his research in Africa and the Americas, Herskovits



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undercut received notions of a cultural hierarchy and challenged the idea that white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture solely defined American culture.

The 1920s' debates on American culture and identity inclined Herskovits toward his acculturation studies. Americans had long debated these issues. While racists and nativists circumscribed visions of American identity, egalitarians divided between unitary and pluralist conceptions of America culture. Which cultural groups could by right be Americans? Was America to be confined to Europeans and their descendants, who "melted into a new race of men," as the eighteenth-century writer Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur maintained in 1782?<sup>2</sup> Or would America include all those who crossed its shores? And would the diverse groups that lived in the United States melt together into one culture, or would they maintain distinctive cultural characteristics?

During the early 1900s the huge influx of southern and eastern European immigrants and the question of African Americans' position in American society made American identity the subject of an intense national debate among intellectuals, politicians, and the general population. In this period conservatives — racists and nativists — employed the concept of difference to subjugate blacks and other racial and cultural minorities, women, and the lower classes "by associating difference with the notion of deviance while simultaneously justifying such assumptions through an appeal to science, biology, nature, or culture." Difference was used as a way to exclude blacks and immigrants from mainstream social and political life.<sup>3</sup> During the 1910s and 1920s nativists sought to define America as a land exclusively for Protestant Anglo-Americans. To ensure success for their vision, they hoped to exclude southern and eastern Europeans, whom they considered inferior and therefore incapable of assimilation into Anglo-American culture.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, most white Americans, blinded by racism, also viewed African Americans and Asian Americans as barred from assimilation under any circumstances.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, liberal egalitarians sought to minimize cultural or racial differences in support of a "melting pot theory of culture." Liberals embraced the assimilation of diverse racial and cultural groups on the basis of equality. Consequently, liberal assimilationists rejected cultural particularism and the championing of cultural differences.<sup>6</sup> Thus liberals emphasized the absence of racial and cultural differences in their advocacy of a melting pot culture that denied the particularity of black

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culture and immigrant cultures. The melting pot concept, however, meant different things to different groups. For example, in Israel Zangwill's 1908 play *The Melting-Pot*, the hero proclaims, "The real American has not arrived. He is only in the Crucible, I tell you — he will be the fusion of all races, the coming superman." This formulation assumed a fusion of races into a new race, the American.<sup>7</sup> During the early twentieth century, however, the melting pot concept was generally associated with "forced Americanization." The movement to require immigrants to discard their Old World cultural identities gained especially strong support during and after the First World War. During the war old-line Americans feared that the primary loyalty of immigrants (especially those from enemy nations, Germany and Austria-Hungary) was to their countries of origin, not the United States. After the war they blamed immigrants for the wave of radical violence. The Americanization movement sought to ensure that immigrants would conform to Anglo-American culture, the old-line Americans' view of the nation's culture.<sup>8</sup>

Postwar events reflected a continuing popular allegiance to Anglo-American superiority. In fact, this era saw a great drive for immigration restriction based in part on pseudoscientific racism. The resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, reaching a membership of over three million in the 1920s, revealed the strength of racist and nativist feeling targeted against Catholics, Jews, and African Americans. Nativist agitation led to the passage in 1924 of the National Origins Act, which substantially reduced immigration from southern and eastern Europe and excluded Asian immigrants.<sup>9</sup>

For Herskovits, the debate on American identity was not just an academic issue. His experience as the son of Jewish immigrants, as one who had taken up and then rejected rabbinical studies, as one who had experienced anti-Semitism, as a war veteran, and as an advocate of leftist politics made the question of identity a very personal one, too. These experiences and his sensitivity to questions of identity and assimilation foreshadowed his interests as a teacher and practitioner of anthropology.

As a young anthropologist, Herskovits, like other racially liberal scholars, allowed his assimilationist bias to lead him to discount the influence of African culture in America. In the social climate of the 1920s, when difference was generally defined as pejorative, many black and Jewish scholars, including Herskovits, diminished the differences be-

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tween their own identities and mainstream American identity. In order to undermine racial discrimination and refute theories of black inequality based on racial differences, Herskovits minimized the differences between the cultures of blacks and whites. Toward that end, he argued that American blacks had absorbed mainstream American culture and that there was no distinct black culture. Up until his first ethnographic field trip, he held to this view, which was the dominant scholarly view at the time. Herskovits's assimilationist position paralleled the views of most mainstream sociologists, including the leading specialist on race relations, Robert Park of the University of Chicago, who rejected cultural pluralism as "either desirable or realizable." Sociologists believed that cultural pluralism reinforced differences that resulted in "hostility, stereotypes, and prejudice." For them, modern society required the dissolution of "traditional, particularistic identities."<sup>10</sup>

But while sociologists and the general population agreed that assimilation was beneficial for European immigrants, most Americans rejected racial assimilation for African Americans and Asian Americans. Moreover, as James McKee has observed, "Most sociologists accepted with little evident regret the segregation of a people still deemed vastly inferior and saw no possible change in the foreseeable future."<sup>11</sup>

Park, who had worked as a publicist for Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute from 1905 to 1912, depicted racial and ethnic relations as a gradual process with four evolutionary stages: competition, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation. Park generally defined assimilation as representing an exchange of cultural elements by two groups in which the two groups merged.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, when Park discussed African Americans' culture contact with white Americans, he tended to derogate black culture. He believed that "the Negro, when he landed in the United States, left behind him almost everything but his dark complexion and his tropical temperament."<sup>13</sup> Park also asserted that African Americans were unique among all peoples in the United States in having no external tradition. He explained differences between black American culture and white American culture by referring to a naturally distinctive racial temperament of blacks, which gave them a "genial, sunny and social disposition" and conditioned them to "expression rather than enterprise and action." In the case of African Americans, the Park School presumed that the assimilation of African Americans would mean their adoption of the stronger, superior white

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American culture. According to this view, the only barrier to the assimilation of blacks into mainstream American society was the evolutionary nature of intergroup interaction or racial temperament.<sup>14</sup> Park's analysis ignored the African influence on American culture and rejected a dynamic, dialectical or multivariate model of culture change. Therefore Park and his students argued that the weak black culture would eventually melt into the dominant white American culture.

Herskovits made his strongest statement of the assimilationist position in his 1925 contribution to *The New Negro*, the collection of prose and poetry by Harlem Renaissance writers edited by Alain Locke.<sup>15</sup> The idea for *The New Negro* was developed at a 1924 dinner in New York attended by prominent white and black editors and writers in which Paul Kellogg, editor of the *Survey Graphic*, suggested to Charles S. Johnson, editor of *Opportunity*, that the *Survey Graphic* "devote an entire issue" to black writers and artists. Johnson liked the idea and recommended that Kellogg ask Locke to organize and edit the special Harlem issue.<sup>16</sup> This issue succeeded earlier issues devoted to various nationalities, including the Russian, Irish, and Mexican.<sup>17</sup>

Locke agreed to edit the special Harlem number and sought to "present a graphic picture of the progressive types, tendencies, and points of view of the Negro." He contacted several black writers and a few white writers who were expert on some aspect of black America. Based on his familiarity with Herskovits's work on the physical anthropology of American Negroes, Locke asked Herskovits to contribute an article, "a short but very important thing on 'Has the Negro a Unique Social Pattern?'"<sup>18</sup>

Herskovits's article, "The Dilemma of Social Pattern," based on his previous research as well as informal visits to Harlem, concluded that black culture was the same as white culture. Herskovits reported that the Harlem community was "just like any other American community. The same pattern, only a different shade!" Moreover, he asserted that blacks had completely assimilated American culture. Finally, and most surprising in view of his later position, Herskovits found "not a trace" of African culture. He maintained that "even the spirituals are an expression of the Negro playing through the typical religious pattern of white America."<sup>19</sup> By emphasizing the similarities between black and white culture, Herskovits would undercut racists' emphasis on racial or cultural differences as evidence of black inferiority.

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Herskovits's conclusions contrasted with those of most of the other contributors to *The New Negro*.<sup>20</sup> While Herskovits highlighted the similarities between black and white culture, many of the writers in this volume emphasized the distinctiveness of black culture. Alain Locke underscored African Americans' "renewed race-spirit that consciously and proudly sets itself apart."<sup>21</sup> Locke offered the spirituals, with their "untarnishable beauty" and their universal appeal, as evidence of Negroes' "race genius."<sup>22</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset wrote about Negro folklore and its African influence.<sup>23</sup> Albert Barnes asserted that Negroes, unlike whites, were natural-born poets.<sup>24</sup> Joel A. Rogers called jazz "one part American and three parts American Negro." Preceded by ragtime, jazz was infused with the African influence.<sup>25</sup> Arthur A. Schomburg stressed the critical, yet neglected, contributions that African Americans had made to American history. Moreover, Schomburg asserted that scientific study would reveal the significance of Africa in world history and the African cultural influence on African Americans.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, from 1925 to 1927 Herskovits continued to disseminate his view that black culture was the same as white culture. He advised a correspondent that he did not think any African culture could "be observed in any of the modes of behavior of the American Negro." Although he cautioned that this was "merely my private opinion," Herskovits insisted that due to the "tremendous variation" in African customs, "to speak of almost anything as 'African' is quite inadmissible."<sup>27</sup>

In a December 1927 article, published only six months before he undertook his first field trip to Suriname, Herskovits wrote that blacks had imbibed the same values as other Americans. He pointed out that black Americans, like white Americans, demonstrated antagonistic attitudes toward foreigners. In addition, Herskovits argued that blacks evidenced a similar type of color consciousness as the general population. He maintained that black men tended to choose wives who had lighter complexions than they did because light complexion conferred higher status. Black men, just like white men, chose a particular bride based on the enhanced status she would confer on her husband. Moreover, Herskovits cited the writings of German musicologist Erich M. Von Hornbostel, "head of the Laboratory of Primitive Music at the Institute of Psychology in the University of Berlin," to argue that "not even the musical form of the American negro is essentially African."<sup>28</sup>

Herskovits's assimilationism was exemplified by his usage of the term

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“acculturation.” In 1927, prior to his first field trip to Suriname, Herskovits defined acculturation as “a body of people accepting in toto the culture of an alien group.”<sup>29</sup> In employing this definition and applying it to the “acculturation” of blacks into white American culture, Herskovits ignored or devalued the distinctive aspects of black American culture. This view approximated, in part, the late-nineteenth-century anthropological perspective on acculturation. In 1880 John Wesley Powell, director of the Bureau of American Ethnology, had written “of the ‘force of acculturation’ which was changing indigenous traditions under the ‘overwhelming presence of millions of civilized people.’”<sup>30</sup> Although Herskovits did not employ this type of value judgment, he did assume a one-sided cultural change. Moreover, like other intellectuals of this period, Herskovits made no distinction between the meaning of acculturation and assimilation and used the former term in an inconsistent manner.<sup>31</sup> In fact, prior to the late 1930s acculturation was rarely used in its modern sense of cross-cultural change, in which both cultures undergo a change.<sup>32</sup> Herskovits’s confusing use of the term “acculturation” in 1927 was the norm at that time.

After receiving a critique from sociologist Malcolm Willey, his close friend and former college roommate, Herskovits began to reassess his conception of acculturation. Willey pointed out that while Herskovits defined acculturation as total acceptance of an alien culture, he only provided evidence of the acceptance of certain cultural traits. Willey suggested that when someone who grew up in one culture moved to another area, that person’s culture would be modified by the new cultural experience. Willey proposed that this experience should be called reacculturation, as acculturation should be defined as the process whereby one learns one’s own native culture. (Herskovits would later use the term “enculturation” for this process.) Willey maintained that Herskovits employed the term “acculturation” to describe different processes. An immigrant coming to America and the child of the immigrant born in America go through two different processes, not the same, as Herskovits described. Thus Willey rejected Herskovits’s analysis of Harlem Negroes’ culture. Instead, Willey concluded, “The Negro isn’t reacculturating because he isn’t taking over an alien culture. You discuss the problem of the Negro throughout your paper on this basis. . . . The Negro is doing just what you and I do — adjusts to the culture surrounding him in the place of birth. That is acculturation; if the Negro went to live in Syria he’d have

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to reacculturate. . . . And there is need to clear the line between borrowing and reacculturation. It seems to me that the Pilgrim fathers did not reacculturate—they merely borrowed [maize, for example].”<sup>33</sup>

Herskovits told Willey that for the Negro experience, he meant to use the term “acculturation” in the sense of “an individual brought up in one country, transported into another.” Herskovits maintained that when Africans were brought to America, they had to accustom “themselves to our civilization.”<sup>34</sup> Herskovits’s views during this period suggest that his assimilationist perspective led him to minimize differences between black and white culture. In doing so, Herskovits also evidenced a cultural chauvinism that assumed that cultural traits that were similar between blacks and whites meant that blacks adopted white traits and not the reverse or some more dynamic, two-way cultural exchange. Thus he argued that Africans adopted “our civilization”; or, as he asserted at the end of his article, “American negroes . . . [are] living the life of white Americans.”<sup>35</sup> Herskovits made this claim based on the Boasian goal of undermining the belief that biological race determined behavior. If American blacks evidenced similar cultural traits as American whites, then race had no impact on behavior.

Nonetheless, for several reasons Herskovits began to explore the possibility of African cultural influences on African Americans. His understanding of Boas’s conception of culture inclined him toward viewing environmental influences, and not naturally predetermined racial endowment, as the key to an understanding of culture and culture change. In his study of folklore, Boas attributed changes in Native American myths to the interaction of “foreign and domestic material” consistent with the “social conditions and habits of the people.” Indeed, in 1898 Boas employed the term “survival” (which Herskovits would use) to identify “the preservation of earlier customs” or “fragments of earlier traditions under modified social conditions.”<sup>36</sup> Boas also emphasized the importance of studying present-day culture and the dynamic nature of culture, and not searching for some presumed “true” or authentic past version of a tradition.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, Herskovits’s knowledge of African culture—gained in his graduate studies—induced him to explore the possibility of African cultural influences. Thus when Herskovits noticed the distinctive motor behavior of his black research assistant (Zora Neale Hurston) during his study of physical anthropology and differences between white and black

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speaking and singing styles, he sought to explain these cultural differences.<sup>38</sup> As Herskovits was already interested in African cultures, it was natural that he would consider the influence of these cultures on African Americans.

At the same time, Herskovits began to feel a dissonance between his assimilationism and the embrace of cultural pluralism by many of his intellectual friends, including the Harlem Renaissance writers. Herskovits's close association with some of the New Negro writers led him to consider the possibility of black cultural distinctiveness. He could not help but be influenced by Locke's perspective given their extensive interaction and correspondence during this period. Furthermore, in 1926, after acknowledging James Weldon Johnson's view that many of the songs of black Americans evidenced an African influence, Herskovits suggested that the question needed to be subjected to scientific study.<sup>39</sup>

The group of intellectuals, led by Horace Kallen, a Jewish immigrant from Germany who championed cultural pluralism while rejecting assimilationism, also influenced Herskovits.<sup>40</sup> Kallen, who Herskovits met at the New School, maintained that "true Americanism lay in the conservation and actual fostering of group differences, not in melting them down or 'contributing' them."<sup>41</sup>

Before Kallen, a number of liberal intellectuals articulated and disseminated cultural pluralist views. Leader of the social settlement house movement Jane Addams and educator John Dewey saw "value in immigrant cultures." Randolph Bourne "argued forcefully for a culturally pluralistic democracy." In 1916, in an essay entitled "Trans-national America," Bourne asserted that Anglo-Saxon America was guilty of "the imposition of its own culture upon the minority peoples."<sup>42</sup> Bourne maintained that immigrants had given America its dynamic quality and that without continued immigration, America would become a stagnant culture devoid of creativity. Indeed, Bourne insisted that there was no such thing as an American culture, rather America was a "federation of cultures."<sup>43</sup>

Well before Bourne and Kallen, W. E. B. Du Bois had articulated a cultural pluralist view by rejecting the type of assimilation that devalued one's cultural heritage.<sup>44</sup> In his 1897 speech before the American Negro Academy entitled "The Conservation of Races," Du Bois, influenced by the romantic nationalism of the German writers Johann von Herder, Johann Fichte, and Heinrich von Treitschke, among others, argued that



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Negroes around the world had a unique contribution to make to humanity.<sup>45</sup> Therefore Du Bois insisted that for American blacks to help the race reach its potential and “be a factor in the world’s history,” they must avoid “absorption by the white Americans,” and “their destiny [must] not [be] a servile imitation of Anglo-Saxon culture.”<sup>46</sup> Du Bois, however, eschewed separatism. He argued that emphasizing racial differences would not necessarily increase racial separation and racial prejudice. Instead, Du Bois maintained that “if . . . there is substantial agreement in laws, language, and religion . . . then there is no reason why, in the same country and on the same street, two or three great national ideals might not thrive and develop, that men of different races might not strive together for their race ideals as well, perhaps even better, than in isolation.”<sup>47</sup>

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) Du Bois moved away from Victorian notions of race and embraced a more modern view, surmounting the assimilation-separation dialectic, substituting the notion of a double-consciousness for blacks, and thereby changing the nature of the debate on race in America. Would blacks gain their freedom by assimilating into white America? Or would blacks win their freedom by escaping the confines of a discourse based on white superiority and black inferiority by developing their own discourse? As David L. Lewis has pointed out, “Henceforth, the destiny of the race could be conceived as leading neither to assimilation nor separatism but to proud, enduring hyphenation.”<sup>48</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s several cultural movements adopted a cultural identification separate from Anglo-Americanism. These included the Southern Agrarians, who offered a communal vision based on the Old South; the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, who embraced black culture; and the movement for American Indian cultural survival led by John Collier, commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933 to 1945.<sup>49</sup>

Inspired by the debate over cultural pluralism and black culture, in 1926 Herskovits formulated a plan for long-term study of black cultures in Africa and the Americas to discover “the African origins of the New World–Negro.”<sup>50</sup> Herskovits proposed to focus on the African cultural heritage of New World blacks to determine the degree to which culture and biology conditioned Negroes’ response to life in the Americas. Herskovits sought cultural and physical connections between West African, West Indian, and southern American Negroes.<sup>51</sup> Herskovits’s study would rectify the failure of researchers to focus on this issue.<sup>52</sup>

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Despite his inability to obtain foundation funding for his plan, he proceeded to implement the proposal piecemeal over the next fifteen years.<sup>53</sup>

While the foundations considered his proposal, Herskovits began a lengthy correspondence with German musicologist Erich M. Von Hornbostel that reveals a subtle change in his views as he began to explore the possibility of African influences on black American culture.<sup>54</sup> In these letters Herskovits scrutinized his own position on the influence of African culture in the Americas. After exchanging notes on their respective areas of research—Herskovits on Negro anthropometry, Hornbostel on African and African American music—the two debated the question of motor behavior within racial groups.<sup>55</sup> Hornbostel argued that motor behavior was “an innate physiological characteristic” transmitted along racial lines, unaffected by cultural environment. Hornbostel based his position on his own family experience while growing up in Vienna, where he evidenced much the same “movements” as his uncle who lived in Hamburg. Hornbostel claimed that all American Indians, regardless of culture or physical environment, had similar motor behavior.<sup>56</sup> Herskovits rejected Hornbostel’s racial argument, insisting that motor behavior was based on environmental influence and was transmitted as a “cultural pattern.” Herskovits “conceive[d] human beings as being very fundamentally conditioned . . . by the manner of behavior of the people among whom they happen to be born.” Herskovits’s view was reinforced by his physical anthropology study, which concluded that American Negroes were, in fact, not even a race. Thus behavioral similarities among Negroes could not be racially determined but must be due to cultural influences. Herskovits suggested that this cultural conditioning might explain Hornbostel’s contention that African and American Negroes both exhibited similar singing behavior. Herskovits then posed the possibility of an African cultural survival: “For could it [similar singing behavior] not be a cultural remnant brought to America by the African slaves, which their descendants retained even after the songs themselves were fundamentally changed according to the European pattern?” Similarly, Herskovits told Hornbostel of Zora Neale Hurston’s distinctive speech, singing, and motor behavior, a style that “would be termed typically Negro.” As Hurston was a mulatto, Herskovits argued that motor behavior or other behaviors must have been passed down as learned behavior and not through biological inheritance of race.<sup>57</sup> Herskovits suggested that Hurston’s characteristic style of singing and speak-

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ing was “carried over as a behavior pattern handed down thru imitation and example from the original African slaves who were brought here.”<sup>58</sup>

Throughout 1927–28 Herskovits, though still skeptical, continued to consider the possibility of African cultural survivals. During this period he studied the Grebo language with a West African teacher. Herskovits noted that “the songs our West African sings for us are unbelievably beautiful, but nothing like either jazz or Negro spirituals.”<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, Herskovits believed his language study was “important as a lead to the discovery of possible linguistic survivals at present existing among American Negroes.”<sup>60</sup>

After the foundations turned down his request to finance his field research into African American acculturation, Herskovits sought other sources of funding. Franz Boas suggested that Herskovits contact Elsie Clews Parsons. Parsons (1874–1941), an anthropologist and folklorist of independent means and the first associate of Boas’s to study black culture, financed a number of anthropologists’ field studies.<sup>61</sup> Recently, Roger D. Abrahams said of Parsons, “More than anyone else, Parsons began the new-world Afro-American fieldwork and generally energized that whole endeavor, sustaining it until a Hurston and a Herskovitz [*sic*] could catch hold.”<sup>62</sup> Parsons told Herskovits that Suriname (then Dutch Guiana) would be “a fruitful area for research into African survivals in The New World” and then proceeded to finance his two field trips to that region.<sup>63</sup>

Herskovits was drawn to Suriname because there was a significant black population that had remained largely separate from the European-descended population since slavery. The Suriname Maroons (then known as the Bush Negroes) were descended from escaped slaves who had established their own communities during the late seventeenth century.<sup>64</sup> Herskovits believed that the Suriname Maroons represented the best possibility for discovering the African cultural and geographic origins of New World blacks because the Maroons’ isolation limited European cultural influence and the Maroons’ environment in Suriname closely approximated their ancestral homeland in Africa. Of the three Suriname Maroon tribes, Herskovits concentrated on the Saramacca, who lived along the northern part of the Suriname River, because they had lived most independently of outside influence. By comparing the culture of the urban blacks with a strong European influence to that of the Saramacca, Herskovits believed he could discern the varying degrees

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of African culture remaining in Suriname.<sup>65</sup> Thus a study of Suriname seemed to provide the best chance of discovering African culture in the New World. After contacting Morton C. Kahn (who would join Herskovits on the first Suriname field trip), a Cornell medical college epidemiologist who had been to Suriname the previous year, and reviewing Kahn's field notes, Herskovits reported that "Suriname seems to be a sort of ethnological happy hunting-grounds."<sup>66</sup>

With funding from Parsons augmented by the Columbia University Social Science Research Council, Herskovits and his wife, Frances, traveled to Suriname during the summers of 1928 and 1929. Although Frances had no formal anthropology training, she became her husband's lifelong research and writing partner, co-writing five books and several articles. At first Boas and Parsons discouraged the idea of Frances joining the initial field trip due to the dangers of traveling in the Tropics. Herskovits, however, convinced them that Frances would be essential to getting better access to the women in the culture. In addition, Kahn's experience with the region and his expertise in tropical diseases mitigated any danger.<sup>67</sup> On his decision to work with his wife, Herskovits later commented, "A field party of a man and wife is ideal . . . because it facilitates study of both sexes. 'And she's a damn good anthropologist, too — not a formal anthropologist — but damn good.'"<sup>68</sup>

The Herskovitses and Kahn sailed from New York in June 1928 and arrived in Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname, the following month. On the way they stopped in Haiti, Curaçao, the Venezuelan coast, Trinidad, and British Guiana. Upon arrival in Suriname, Herskovits and Kahn journeyed to the interior to study the Saramacca Maroons. Meanwhile, Frances Herskovits studied the town Negroes in Paramaribo. This first field trip was no picnic for the young anthropologist. He suffered various ailments, including an infected leg, heavy bleeding from a wound, a sore throat, a full-body rash, a skin infection, and high fever. While laid up in bed, he was moved to exclaim, "Black buzzards and green tomcats! It's enough to make strong men weep!" Nonetheless, Herskovits could not have been more pleased with the results of his first experience of ethnographic fieldwork.<sup>69</sup>

For their second field trip the next summer, the Herskovitses again sailed from New York in June, arriving in Paramaribo in early July. They spent most of this trip with the Saramacca Maroons, a few days in Auka villages, and some time collecting folklore from town Negroes.<sup>70</sup> On

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this trip, unlike the first, Frances Herskovits accompanied her husband into the interior to study the Maroons. Hence, a Colorado newspaper published an article entitled “Woman Explorer Plans Study of Savage Women,” which reported that “Mrs. Melville J. Herskovits of Northwestern University, expects to be the first white woman to enter the Suriname River bush country.”<sup>71</sup>

Herskovits’s field trips to Suriname set the pattern for his future fieldwork. His research method was to enlist informants to discuss their culture. He also observed rituals and other everyday occurrences of life among the Suriname Negroes.<sup>72</sup> To document the material culture and other cultural traits, Herskovits collected artifacts, recorded music, and took motion pictures and still photographs.<sup>73</sup> Herskovits rarely spent more than a few months on a single field trip. He believed that it was unnecessary to learn his subjects’ language in advance, although he did sometimes pick up a bit of the language during his research. In lieu of linguistic literacy, Herskovits generally used “pidgin” dialects and interpreters.<sup>74</sup> By the end of his first Suriname trip, Herskovits could speak some *taki-taki*, the dialect of the Maroons.<sup>75</sup> Herskovits’s fluency in French, acquired during his study at the University of Poitiers following the end of the First World War, helped him in his fieldwork in Dahomey (a French colony) and Haiti.

Herskovits was often criticized, notably by British anthropologists, for conducting relatively short field trips instead of living for long periods of time among the people he was studying.<sup>76</sup> More recently, anthropologist Richard Price called the Herskovitses’ field work in Suriname “brief and by modern standards superficial,” although he conceded that “their book [on Suriname] succeeds . . . in conveying a convincing portrait of village life, insofar as a traveler could observe it.”<sup>77</sup> Herskovits asserted that due to his and his wife’s preparation, knowledge of Negro cultures, and efficiency, they could do quite a bit in a short period of time. For example, Herskovits maintained that they were able in “two days in Barbados, . . . on the basis of our background, to establish the presence of a number of African traits of culture that had never been noticed before.”<sup>78</sup> Herskovits also insisted that repeated trips to related cultures mitigated the necessity of a single extended field trip. Yet Herskovits did not expect British anthropologists to change their views, as “the dogma in Britain, handed down from the historical accident of [Bronislaw] Malinowski’s stay among the Trobriands [Malinowski was

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stuck there due to the outbreak of World War I], is that you can't really do anything unless you stay at least three years and learn the language!"<sup>79</sup> In any event, Herskovits's methods, employing informants and conducting field trips that lasted several months, were fairly common at the time, especially among anthropologists who did fieldwork among Native American cultures. The brief duration of the field trips was due, in part, to the limited funding available.<sup>80</sup>

The Herskovitses' first field trips represented a kind of seasoning for the young anthropologists as they accustomed themselves to the experience of fieldwork in an unfamiliar culture. Their inexperience, their American arrogance, and their desire to get as much information as possible in a brief period led to contention and danger on their second Suriname field trip. Simon Ottenberg, a Herskovits student, later commented that Herskovits "was a man in a hurry."<sup>81</sup>

In a ten-day visit to one Saramacca village, the home of the Saramacca headman, the more the Herskovitses pressed for information, the more the headman resisted. At one point Frances suggested that they leave, telling her husband, "we've gone so deeply into the religious and ceremonial life that we can get nothing more and that the old fellow [the headman] is getting a bit uneasy." Although Herskovits initially disagreed with his wife, he soon changed his mind. Reflecting his concern, he wrote in his journal, "But we're alone in the interior, and Fann [Frances] thinks my question of last night, when I mentioned the name of Agun, the Nigerian god of man and iron, and whom they know, with Kromanti, which is undoubtedly their 'standing army' and a secret society for protection thoroughly alarmed them." In a very anxious state, the Herskovitses decided to leave the next day. Inventing an excuse, they told the headman that they needed to leave because the cook was ill. Indicative of the potential danger, during their last night in the village the headman sang a song about how Frances's "belly should stop producing and that we [the Herskovits party] all ought to die." After they left, the Herskovitses noted that "[the villagers] think they hoodwinked us on such matters as the name of the earth-mother and those of the lo [clan], . . . and I'm sure if they knew how much we really had, it would go harder." As the Herskovitses left, they nervously wondered if the Saramacca would "try anything on the river."<sup>82</sup>

In their desire to understand the Maroon culture, the Herskovitses had transgressed Saramacca cultural practices and violated their code of

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behavior. Without the establishment of proper trust, certain knowledge was not revealed to outsiders. A ten-day visit was not nearly long enough to establish the trust of the people. Moreover, by pressing for information, the Herskovitses alienated the village headman.<sup>83</sup> In their published account of the field trip, the Herskovitses described the Saramacca people's general distrust of whites. The Saramacca believed that whites would use the knowledge they gained against them. Nonetheless, the Herskovitses did not mention their feelings of anxiety and fear, nor did they reveal their early departure due to the antagonism caused by their attempts to delve deeper into the secret cultural and spiritual beliefs of the people.<sup>84</sup>

Although in many ways the Herskovitses were very respectful of the Suriname Negroes, their practice of bargaining for material goods also brought them into conflict with the Suriname Negroes. During the first trip, the Herskovitses bargained for a total of 134 items, including a parrot. Although they were told that a game called *adji-boto* was shared village property, the Herskovitses insisted on bargaining for it. After purchasing the game, Herskovits noted that there was "great regret in the village at losing the board, as apparently everyone played with it."<sup>85</sup> By using their superior economic resources, the Herskovitses were able to entice the Maroons to sell property that they would have preferred to keep. Moreover, as anthropologists Sally Price and Richard Price have argued, the Herskovitses had again violated the cultural practices of the Maroons, who considered bargaining "rude and excessive."<sup>86</sup>

Despite his cultural insensitivity and his arrogance, Herskovits's first field trip transformed his views on the African cultural influence in the Americas. Alluding to his own experience, he later wrote, "How many of us [anthropologists] . . . [have had] the experience of going to the field with conceptions of the people and their life, and with problems that have had to be revised, often radically, in the face of actual data?"<sup>87</sup> Although Herskovits had expected to find some African influence among the Suriname Maroons due to their longtime isolation from European cultural influences, he was astounded at how quickly he discovered African cultural elements. Soon after arriving in Suriname for the first time, Herskovits made a journal entry that reflected his great excitement at learning of a possible African survival: "Last night [A. C.] Van Lier [a Dutch official] told us of the custom (he said it was African!) of burning a light all night on the anniversary of [some]one's death."<sup>88</sup> Upon visit-

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ing a Djuka village, he noted that a fetish that he described as a “crude representation of a human figure coated with mud . . . looked very African.” Herskovits called an obeah (a charm with supernatural force used to protect people from harm) made of carved skulls “Curiously African!” The “houses and the fetishes, the naked children and the cicatrised [ritually scarred] grown-ups” were all reminiscent of Africa. Indeed, he found that “the village as a whole certainly looks like pictures from Africa — Congo and West.”<sup>89</sup>

Studying the political and social organization, linguistics and phonetics, marriage ceremonies, and economic and material life of the Saracca Maroons, Herskovits found many African cultural correspondences, perhaps most notably in the spiritual realm.<sup>90</sup> After witnessing an “obia-dance; an unforgettable religious rite,” he found the Maroons’ use of the drums, the dancing and singing, and the dancers possessed by spirits remarkable for their Africanness as well as the controlled nature of the movements. Herskovits was also impressed by the importance in this culture of the belief in magic that he found similar to many African cultures. As he had not yet been to Africa, Herskovits relied on his secondhand study of African cultures in making these connections.<sup>91</sup>

Herskovits’s experience of music in Suriname transformed his view of the cultural influences on African American music. A trained musician who had studied the violin for years in his youth and could also play the piano and drums, Herskovits used this expertise to analyze the music of other cultures.<sup>92</sup> One night during his first field trip, the sound of singing and the beat of a *kiva-kiva* awakened Herskovits. He got out of his hammock, “went outside, and gasped at the beauty of the night. . . . [A] man chanted in a high tenor and never ranging more than an octave and always descending in tone, — to be followed by the incredible high soprano chorus of the women. Again, Africa.”<sup>93</sup> Herskovits found that even in the capital city of Paramaribo, which had long had a large European population, Negroes had preserved many African rhythms and songs.<sup>94</sup> In November 1929 Herskovits wrote to Hornbostel that the songs of the Suriname blacks ranged from those that were “entirely African to music that is entirely European.” Several of the Suriname songs reminded Herskovits of American Negro spirituals.<sup>95</sup> In addition, the songs of the Suriname Maroons contained African deities in them.<sup>96</sup> After hearing the Suriname recordings Herskovits sent him, even Hornbostel was convinced of the African nature of the songs. “I was quite



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surprised how little is the white influence on these songs! All the examples I heard, and even those which you found resembling U.S.A. Spirituals seem to me very African," remarked Hornbostel.<sup>97</sup>

Meanwhile, Herskovits found significant African cultural elements in the social relationships of the Suriname Maroons, including the importance of the belief in matrilineality and the influence of the mother's brother over the children.<sup>98</sup> The paternal spiritual and religious influence resembled that found among West Africans.<sup>99</sup> Herskovits argued that "in its aspects of maternal descent with recognition of the paternal side through inheritance of the 'kina' or food taboo from the father, [Suriname Maroon culture] is reminiscent of certain of the tribes of West Africa in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and elsewhere."<sup>100</sup>

Following his second field trip to Suriname, Herskovits reported that there was a significant linguistic connection between the vocabulary and grammar of the Suriname Negroes and West African languages. The Suriname Negroes used the names of West African tribes for the names of their clans. In addition, numerous religious terms used by the Suriname Maroons were Dahomey or Ashanti words, such as the name for the earth mother and the word for the sky.<sup>101</sup> The correspondences in language, religion, music, and family convinced Herskovits that the essential origins of the Suriname Maroon culture lay along the West African coast between the Ashanti on the west and Nigeria on the east, including the peoples of Dahomey, Loango, and the Gold Coast.<sup>102</sup>

One of the most surprising discoveries of the two Suriname field trips was the scope of the African influences on the culture of the town blacks in Paramaribo, who had long been in contact with Europeans and American Indians. Herskovits expected that the remaining African cultural elements among the town blacks, beyond folk tales and proverbs, would be minimal. Nonetheless, working with an informant in Paramaribo, Frances Herskovits uncovered a number of African beliefs in spirits and deities and numerous African practices.<sup>103</sup> Often, the African influence was combined with other cultural influences. One example of this multicultural influence was that the townspeople adopted Dutch-style head wraps but employed the African practice of naming the different designs by using a proverb to "commemorate noteworthy happenings in the colony."<sup>104</sup> In Frances Herskovits's work with urban blacks, she found a predominantly European material culture, with the greatest number of African influences in folklore and religious beliefs.<sup>105</sup>

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Although Herskovits found the Suriname Maroon culture to be “essentially African,” he also discovered many cultural elements among the Maroons that represented syncretisms of African, American Indian, and European cultures. For example, he observed that the Maroons’ riverboats were traditional American Indian dugouts, but the pointed blades of the paddles and the carvings on the boats and the paddles were in an African style.<sup>106</sup>

After completing the two field trips to Suriname, Herskovits published a major interpretive essay in which he argued that African cultural influence extended throughout the Americas. Based on his ethnographic research and the writings of others, Herskovits maintained that it was possible to categorize the cultures of the Americas based on the degree of African influence. Focusing on folklore, linguistics, and religious practices, he listed the following African American peoples in order from most to least African cultural influence: Suriname Maroons, “Negro neighbors [of the Suriname Maroons] on the coastal plains of the Guianas,” Haitian peasants, “Santo Domingo,” other West Indian peoples, “such isolated groups living in the United States as the Negroes of the Savannahs of southern Georgia, or those of the Gullah islands,” “vast mass of Negroes of all degrees of racial mixture living in the South of the United States,” and, finally, Negroes with “nothing of the African tradition left.”<sup>107</sup> Evidently Herskovits’s position on the African influence on northern blacks, which he had discussed in his 1925 *New Negro* article, had not yet changed.

Herskovits also concluded “that the slaves who fixed the cultural traditions of the New World Negroes came from a much more restricted area than is ordinarily thought to have been the case, . . . they came from the Ivory Coast eastward to the Cameroons.” He argued that as relatively few Congo natives were enslaved in the Americas, they did not “impress many of their cultural or linguistic traditions upon the other Negroes whose descendants are found there today.” Herskovits noted that in Brazil and Cuba, the Yoruba dominated; in the French Caribbean, the Ewe dominated; in Jamaica, descendants of people of the Gold Coast dominated; in the eastern United States and Trinidad and other British islands, excluding Jamaica, the Yoruban and Gold Coast descendants dominated. Furthermore, Herskovits contended that African cultural survivals such as place and deity names, death and burial customs, and

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family and clan structure in the Americas were much greater than had been thought.<sup>108</sup>

The Herskovitses published two books, *Rebel Destiny: Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana* (1934) and *Suriname Folklore* (1936), that reinforced their thesis that African culture was alive and thriving among the Suriname Negroes. In coauthoring *Rebel Destiny*, Melville and Frances each “wrote first drafts of half the chapters and then rewrote the other set of chapters.”<sup>109</sup> Neither of these two books was a conventional ethnography. Except for the preface that summarized the goals and conclusions of the trip, *Rebel Destiny* was essentially a narrative, including extensive dialogue, of the Herskovitses’ travels in Suriname. The book included chapters on influential individuals such as a headman and a craftsman. Other chapters focused on women’s work, religion, and family. In contrast, *Suriname Folk-Lore* was written for an academic audience and focused primarily on the folklore of Paramaribo Negroes and the coastal blacks, with a section on the proverbs and songs of the Maroons. The first section focused on the culture of the Paramaribo blacks, and the remainder of the book was a technical discussion of the stories, proverbs, and music of the people.<sup>110</sup>

Both books were praised for their fine scholarship that demonstrated the dynamism and complexity of the African-influenced culture of Suriname. Reviews in newspapers, popular magazines, and scholarly journals congratulated the authors for presenting convincing evidence of the strong African influence on the Saramacca Maroons and the lesser, though still significant, African influence on the town Negroes of Paramaribo. The Herskovitses were lauded for their objectivity, with one reviewer contrasting the Herskovitses’ sympathetic view of the people with the biased and degrading views usually presented in accounts of non-Western peoples. In fact, none of the reviewers disputed the Herskovitses’ thesis that the African cultural influence in the Americas was strong.<sup>111</sup>

Following the two field trips to Suriname, Herskovits saw the next step in his study of African diasporic culture as a field trip to West Africa. To advance his analysis of the Africanness of black American cultures, Herskovits needed to see West African culture firsthand. Herskovits chose Dahomey (now Benin) because very little fieldwork had been done there compared to other parts of West Africa, including Nigeria, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), and Togoland.<sup>112</sup> In addition, the Suriname field

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trips had yielded many cultural correspondences with Dahomey, including the use of Dahomean god names by the Saramacca Maroons. Indeed, the Maroons called their sacred city Dahomey.<sup>113</sup> In addition to Dahomey, Herskovits wanted to go to Nigeria and the Gold Coast, as the evidence from Suriname also indicated important cultural influences from these two areas.<sup>114</sup> With the helpful intervention of Boas and the generosity of Elsie Clews Parsons, arrangements were finalized for funding of the trip to Dahomey, with \$3,500 coming from Parsons and a similar amount from the Columbia University Social Science Research Council.<sup>115</sup> Du Bois helped facilitate the trip by providing Herskovits letters of introduction to two Senegalese deputies to the French parliament, the president of Liberia, and a Gold Coast lawyer.<sup>116</sup>

The Herskovitses spent about six months in West Africa, from February to August 1931, including three and a half months in Dahomey, one month in Nigeria, and one month in the Gold Coast.<sup>117</sup> Upon arrival in West Africa, the anthropologists quickly noticed numerous cultural correspondences with Suriname. In Nigeria the marks on people's legs and shoulders were similar to the "*Konmanti-cuttee*" of the Suriname Maroons. The Suriname Maroon dugout and the Nigerian dugout were very similar, suggesting that the former was of Nigerian provenance. The Herskovitses also noticed similarities in language between the *taki-taki* of the Suriname Maroons and the "Negro-English" of their Nigerian guide.<sup>118</sup> On the drive into Abomey, Dahomey, they saw shrines that looked "exactly like those we know from Suriname."<sup>119</sup> In addition, in Abomey Herskovits saw two women wearing silver shields similar to "shields shown on the pictures of official meetings of Bush Negro [Suriname Maroon] chiefs."<sup>120</sup> In Dahomey, when Herskovits drummed (on his sun helmet) the rhythm to the sky god that he had learned in Suriname, one of the chiefs immediately recognized this rhythm as that for the Dahomey sky god.<sup>121</sup>

In 1938 Herskovits published *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom*, a two-volume study that established the complexity and strength of Dahomean culture.<sup>122</sup> Herskovits detailed Dahomean history and culture, providing extensive coverage of Dahomean economic life, social organization, rituals, politics, religious life, and art. Herskovits maintained that African culture and institutions were indigenous products that were little affected by outsiders, Europeans or Arabs. According to Herskovits, "Life in Dahomey goes on today little different from the way

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it was lived before contact with Europeans.<sup>123</sup> In this way, Herskovits challenged those who, believing in the inferiority of Africans, argued that complex aspects of African culture must be the result of external influences.

Herskovits also weighed in on the raging debate over the question of whether African art, then in vogue, was really African or the result of the influence of the “superior” Europeans or Arabs. During the late 1920s Herskovits had published articles in popular magazines and scholarly journals that emphasized the African origins of African art.<sup>124</sup> In 1934 Melville and Frances published articles on the art of brass casting, appliqué cloth, and wood carving in Dahomey. With the numerous Dahomean carvings, woodcuts, and appliqué cloth that the Herskovitses brought back from their field trip, they now had extensive material evidence to reinforce their interpretive position.<sup>125</sup>

Nonetheless, in Herskovits’s desire to underscore the indigenous nature of Dahomean culture, he presented a static view that omitted certain key factors influencing that culture. By emphasizing the similarity between Dahomean culture before European contact and during the contemporary period, Herskovits underestimated the influence of change over time, both from internal and external forces.<sup>126</sup> Like many contemporary anthropologists, Herskovits also excluded any systematic discussion of the influence of power relations and imperialism on the cultures of colonized peoples.<sup>127</sup> In the sections on politics, for instance, Herskovits devoted little space to the influence of the French colonial government.<sup>128</sup>

At any rate, reviewers generally praised the book on Dahomey.<sup>129</sup> They congratulated Herskovits for presenting a comprehensive view of a complex culture. Several reviewers noted that the study did well to analyze the culture on its own terms and not by comparing it to Western cultures.<sup>130</sup> One reviewer maintained that this study “should do much to dispel any lingering ideas about the intrinsic inferiority of the Negro.”<sup>131</sup> Similarly, Alain Locke complimented Herskovits on his objective rendering of the culture of Dahomey as a valuable corrective to previous accounts that interpreted African cultures as inferior or savage.<sup>132</sup> Despite some positive comments, Carter Woodson asserted that only a native Dahomean could construct a definitive picture of Dahomean culture. According to Woodson, Herskovits, or any other foreign anthro-

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pologist who spent a limited time traveling in a country, could only present an “incomplete” picture.<sup>133</sup>

Having completed fieldwork in Suriname and Dahomey, Herskovits decided that the next step in his study of African diasporic cultures was to head back to the Americas. Based on his fieldwork in Dahomey and his reading of the literature on Haiti, Herskovits suspected that there were close cultural ties between Dahomey and Haiti. In addition, he believed that, except for Suriname, Haiti was the most African culture in the Americas. Elsie Clews Parsons reinforced Herskovits’s desire to study Haiti, telling him that in the other Caribbean islands, there were significantly less African cultural elements.<sup>134</sup> On Boas’s advice, Herskovits contributed \$1,300 to the Columbia University research fund, which was matched by \$1,300 from the Rockefeller Foundation, to finance the field trip to Haiti. Herskovits also relied on the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Research Council to finance the recording of music and the taking of motion pictures.<sup>135</sup> This field trip to Haiti and his subsequent field trip to Trinidad made Herskovits “the first American anthropologist to do extensive fieldwork in the Caribbean.”<sup>136</sup>

Herskovits’s twelve-week trip to Haiti during the summer of 1934, the most arduous of his field trips due to the tropical climate, proved successful in establishing the importance of African cultural influences in Haiti. Taking the advice of Haitian historian and politician Jean Price-Mars, the Herskovitses stayed in the village of Mirebalais, the site of an unsuccessful 1918–20 rebellion against the occupation force of the U.S. Marines, who had invaded Haiti in 1915 and were withdrawn in 1934.<sup>137</sup> Despite the extended presence of American Marines, Herskovits missed their impact on the culture of the Haitian people. In fact, American officials banned the religious practices of Vodun, raided houses of worship, and seized ceremonial objects. Nonetheless, Herskovits found the people friendly toward Americans, an attitude that benefited his work.<sup>138</sup>

In *Life in a Haitian Valley*, Herskovits’s analysis of cultural change emerged fully formed. More than in his previous work, the anthropologist employed both historical and ethnographic evidence to determine the relative cultural influences of Europeans and Africans in the Americas. Herskovits called Haitian culture an amalgam of various cultural influences.<sup>139</sup>

Herskovits’s book also challenged previous works by white journalists and travelers that distorted and sensationalized Haitian culture in order

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to present a picture of exoticism. These authors viewed Haitian culture as primitive, in an earlier stage of development compared to that of the West. For example, *The Magic Island*, a best-seller published in 1929 by journalist William Seabrook, simultaneously praised “voodoo” while characterizing it as savagery and “superstitious mumbo-jumbo.”<sup>140</sup> As historian Mary Renda has observed, “Seabrook’s lurid and titillating tale of a land where soulless beings recognized ‘neither father nor wife nor mother’ promoted the belief in a benevolent U.S. military paternalism in Haiti.”<sup>141</sup> Herskovits criticized this type of writing. In 1935, in his book review entitled “Voodoo Nonsense,” he attacked another traveler’s “nonsensical” account of Haiti for its distortions, exaggerations, and “unmitigated falsifications.” Herskovits called for a dispassionate work on Haitian culture, which he published two years later.<sup>142</sup>

In the first part of his book, Herskovits employed contemporary writings and historical works to trace the cultural history of Haiti. He was fascinated by the integration of French and African cultures in Haiti.<sup>143</sup> Based on his historical research, Herskovits found a tension between French cultural influences, such as Catholicism, and African religious practices, notably Vodun, which included the practice of magic. In other cases, new institutions were created as accommodations between African and European traditions. For example, the institution of *plaçage* reconciled African plural marriage and European monogamy. Thus in Haiti one might marry according to the Catholic Church but also marry another person outside of the Church, according to folk tradition.<sup>144</sup>

In the second and third parts of the book, Herskovits analyzed Haitian culture based on his fieldwork. As in his study of Dahomey, Herskovits focused on religion, work, and the stages of individual and family life. In the final part, called “Haiti, a Cultural Mosaic,” Herskovits concluded that Haiti represented a fascinating example of the ways in which people combine various cultural influences to create their own way of life. Haitians built houses with West African-type hatching and wall construction, while decorating their homes with European-style furniture.<sup>145</sup> In farming, the Haitians employed mostly European tools, such as a European long-handled hoe, while they planted seeds exactly like the Dahomeans. Each made the same holes for the seeds with their feet, while passing seeds with the right hand from a calabash of seeds held under the left arm.<sup>146</sup> Perhaps the most intriguing cultural combination in Haiti was the integration of Catholicism and African-influenced

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Vodun in the spiritual lives of the people. Despite official Church antagonism toward Vodun practices, the people continued to practice Vodun rites such as animal sacrifice, possession rituals, and worship of Vodun deities. Meanwhile, Vodun practitioners integrated their beliefs with Church rituals. Many Haitians believed that when a Catholic priest preached, he was possessed just as practitioners of Vodun were possessed by deities during their rituals.<sup>147</sup> In fact, Herskovits argued that the willingness of Vodun practitioners to accommodate their beliefs and rituals to Catholicism represented an African survival: "In Africa the conquest of one people by another meant the mutual interchange and acceptance of the respective deities."<sup>148</sup>

Herskovits suggested that tension between the European and African cultural elements in Haiti caused the often remarked upon social, economic, and political instability.<sup>149</sup> He observed that Haitians at times simultaneously esteemed and disdained institutions, individuals, and objects. Herskovits called this process "socialized ambivalence," in which, for instance, a Haitian undergoes "unwilling possession by the gods of his ancestors" and then suffers profound remorse due to his or her "strict Catholic upbringing."<sup>150</sup> Herskovits's description of the socialized ambivalence of Haitians is reminiscent of Du Bois's 1903 description of the divided consciousness of African Americans: "One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."<sup>151</sup>

Yet Herskovits's deployment of a psychological explanation for Haiti's social, economic, and political instability minimized the impact of foreign domination, internal social conflict, and political corruption. By the time of Herskovits's research, Haiti had a long history of conflict between blacks and mulattoes and between urban elites and rural peasants. Furthermore, various European nations and, more recently, the United States had sought and often achieved economic and/or political domination over Haiti.<sup>152</sup>

In a final chapter, Herskovits reproved black nationalists and white supremacists who, for political reasons, would distort the significance of his findings regarding African survivals and syncretic cultures. Black nationalists might assert that differences between black and white cultures justified a separate black nation, while white segregationists might employ these differences to justify their position. These views, according to



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Herskovits, misinterpreted the nature of his findings. That black Americans had retained some African cultural elements did not negate the fact that they had also assimilated into American culture in proportion with the opportunities afforded them. Furthermore, the syncretic nature of African American cultures did not set them apart from other cultures. Rather, all cultures were formed by diverse influences. Therefore, Herskovits insisted, African Americans were no different from German Americans or Italian Americans.<sup>153</sup> In this way Herskovits sought to restrain both black nationalists and white supremacists from misusing his conclusions about black culture.

*Life in a Haitian Valley* received generally good reviews, although some critics argued that Herskovits had overstated the degree of African cultural influence in Haiti.<sup>154</sup> The anthropologist Ruth Benedict called the book the best one yet published on Haiti. She applauded Herskovits's authoritative analysis of varying African and European influences and Haitian instability.<sup>155</sup> In contrast, University of Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield, while lauding the book as an exemplary work on acculturation, asserted that Herskovits exaggerated the African influences and minimized the European influences. Redfield found Herskovits's use of the phrase "socialized ambivalence" unconvincing as an explanation for Haitian political and social instability.<sup>156</sup> George Herzog argued that Herskovits's evidence demonstrated not "socialized ambivalence" but effective and stable assimilation of both African and European religious traditions in Haiti.<sup>157</sup> Guy B. Johnson, who had earlier written that spirituals were European-influenced musical forms, now altered his views in the face of Herskovits's evidence, noting, "I probably over-emphasized the influence of the white heritage." Nevertheless, Johnson still disagreed with Herskovits about the extent of the African cultural influence.<sup>158</sup>

In 1939 the Herskovitses, joined by their three-year-old daughter, Jean, undertook a second field trip to the West Indies. This time they journeyed to Trinidad, spending three months in a small village called Toco. This field trip was financed by a \$3,250 grant from the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>159</sup> The Herskovitses chose Trinidad because ten years earlier they had heard of Shango worshipers who practiced rituals there that were similar to those of the Yoruba of Nigeria.<sup>160</sup>

In contrast to his findings on previous field trips, in Trinidad Herskovits discovered an African American culture that evidenced more Euro-

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pean influences than African. European cultural influences were dominant in religion, politics, economics, and social structure. Nonetheless, many African customs had been retained, with some operating “beneath the surface.” To explain the development of Trinidadian culture, Herskovits offered two new concepts: reinterpretation and cultural focus. Over hundreds of years, Trinidadians had created a culture by reinterpreting or adapting European and African traditions according to their needs at the time.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, Herskovits argued that the particular circumstances of the history of a people and the parts of a people’s culture that are of paramount importance to them — which Herskovits called cultural focus — determined which cultural elements had been retained in the whole or reinterpreted. Under circumstances of culture contact, Herskovits maintained that “resistance [to cultural change] is greatest in the focal area.” By contrast, in “a stable culture, innovations are most readily accepted” in the focal area.<sup>162</sup>

Among the direct African influences on Toco culture were African foods and eating habits, such as meal times and the custom of the father eating separately from the mother and children. Toco hunters and fishermen used charms that focused on “supernatural beings known as the ‘little people’ of the forest,” similar to other “little people” found in the traditions of West Africa and black cultures in Guiana and Brazil.<sup>163</sup>

Herskovits found many examples of cultural practices in Toco that showed the reinterpretation of both European and West African traditions. For example, Herskovits found that whenever a mother in Toco was called away on an emergency and had to leave her child alone, she placed “an open Bible or prayer book” at the child’s side. This was a reinterpretation of the West African belief that if an infant must be left unattended, he or she must be given supernatural protection.<sup>164</sup>

The syncretism of African and Christian cultural elements was revealed in the religious practices of the Shouters, Trinidadian Baptists who worshiped in an unrestrained manner that included shaking and dancing when infused with the “spirit.”<sup>165</sup> Herskovits viewed the Shouters’ organization as a reinterpretation of African cult organization, with the leader of the Shouters functioning as the African cult-head, or priest. The “vision-experience” of the Shouters was reminiscent of how West Africans experienced their gods. The rhythms of the hymns the Shouters sang, their hand-clapping and feet-tapping, and their body movements were similar to the rituals of West Africa. The difference between Toco

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and West African rituals was that the Shouters' envisioned Jesus Christ rather than a West African deity.<sup>166</sup> *Trinidad Village*, published in 1947, received generally good reviews, although some reviewers criticized the study for omitting important aspects of the culture or overstating the African influence.<sup>167</sup> Several reviewers pointed out that Herskovits had failed to properly analyze the impact of British imperial control on the culture. One reviewer criticized the lack of analysis of the frustration the Toco people felt about British control.<sup>168</sup> Trinidadian historian Eric Williams criticized the Herskovitses for underplaying the cultural impact of British-style public education, one of the main institutions for foisting British culture on the Trinidadians. Williams also reproved the Herskovitses for praising the British "emphasis on literary training for white-collar work" and praising the British imposition of their own standards on the Trinidadians.<sup>169</sup>

In his rejoinder, Herskovits argued that *Trinidad Village* contained only "about two paragraphs" on formal education, because "formal education is much less important in the life of the child than is the training he receives outside the schools." Herskovits also maintained that, contrary to Williams's assertion, he did not advocate British-style education. Herskovits denied Williams's assertion that the Herskovitses' brief discussion of public education indicated that they supported the status quo.<sup>170</sup>

Author and former Herskovits assistant Zora Neale Hurston criticized the Herskovitses for finding African survivals where they did not exist. Hurston rejected their claim that the "mourning ground" of the Shouters, a retreat area for initiation and other spiritual rituals, represented an African survival. Hurston maintained that the practice of "repairing to the 'praying ground' . . . arose out of the conditions of slavery and out of contact with the American Indian." According to Hurston, this practice stemmed from "the early denial by the slave owners of the participation of Negroes in Christianity. So the slaves developed the scheme of meeting at night at some glade deep in the forest and holding services there."<sup>171</sup> Nonetheless, the Herskovitses' account of the mourning ground did provide a number of examples of West African cultural elements, including seclusion, massage after periods of stillness, and proscriptio from handling money or knives after mourning practice.<sup>172</sup>

The Herskovitses' last major ethnographic field trip was their Brazil trip. Funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Herskovitses spent one year in Brazil from September 1941 to August

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1942.<sup>173</sup> They undertook fieldwork for six months in Bahia in northern Brazil and one month in Porto Alegre in southern Brazil. Besides fieldwork, Herskovits also visited several educational institutions and government officials for the purpose of assessing the state of the social sciences in Brazil as part of a program of improving American-Brazilian cooperation in social science research. This was part of a larger Rockefeller Foundation program designed to improve American-Latin American relations.<sup>174</sup> Despite suffering a heart attack on this trip, Herskovits completed his work and published a number of articles, although no book, detailing the important African cultural influence in Bahia and other regions of Brazil.<sup>175</sup>

In Bahia Herskovits found a people who had “uniquely adjusted their African ways to the demands of the modern city.” Unlike in Haiti, Herskovits detected no psychological tension among the Bahians due to the mixing of African and European cultural elements. Herskovits learned of many African survivals, including African foods, language, cooperative work styles (though to a lesser degree than in other African American cultures the Herskovitses had studied), and, despite religious and secular prohibitions, plural marriage.<sup>176</sup>

The religious cult groups were the most powerful example of an African-like institution in Brazil.<sup>177</sup> The Brazilian Negroes had created cult groups reminiscent of those in West Africa. In Bahia the cult group was called Candomblé. As in West Africa, these cults organized rituals based on knowledge of African deities. A priest or priestess headed each cult house. Initiation rituals included the cooking of ritual foods, making offerings to a deity, and dancing in a state of possession, as in West African rituals.<sup>178</sup> The Herskovitses discovered that, contrary to popular belief, southern Brazil also contained important evidence of African cultural survivals. In Porto Alegre they found “a large Negro population, whose ways of life include many elements of African custom which differ only in aspects of detail from those of Bahia, the acknowledged center of Africanisms in Brazil.”<sup>179</sup> As in Bahia, the anthropologists found African-like cult organizations and religious rituals, African deity names, and possession dances.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to pursuing his own acculturation studies, Herskovits sought to promote acculturation research by other anthropologists and to make it an essential part of anthropology. Toward that end, he sought to clear

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up some of the prevalent confusion in discussions of culture contact and to ensure that the new approach to culture change was disseminated throughout the scholarly community. Accordingly, in 1935 the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) formed a subcommittee of the three leading anthropologists in acculturation studies, Ralph Linton, Robert Redfield, and Herskovits, to study the problem. Within a year they published "A Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation" in four academic journals: *American Anthropologist*, *Man*, *Africa*, and *Oceania*.<sup>181</sup> The subcommittee defined acculturation as follows: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."<sup>182</sup> By defining acculturation as two-way cultural influence, the anthropologists undercut previous assumptions about cultural contact that stressed Western superiority. Furthermore, the subcommittee differentiated acculturation from other types of culture contact. Culture change included acculturation and other cultural dynamics, while assimilation was sometimes "a phase of acculturation," and diffusion was an "aspect of the process of acculturation."<sup>183</sup> One observer has noted, "This 1936 definition became the point of departure for all subsequent discussions of the term."<sup>184</sup>

As a result of his acculturation studies and his participation on the SSRC subcommittee, Herskovits became an outspoken advocate for the central importance of acculturation studies in anthropology. In 1936 he advised South African anthropologist Isaac Schapera to prepare an article on the acculturation of the Bakxatla of South Africa for the acculturation committee and submit it for publication to the *American Anthropologist*. Leslie Spier, editor of the *American Anthropologist*, however, rejected Schapera's "Acculturation among the Bakxatla of South Africa," based on his view that acculturation studies were outside the purview of anthropologists. According to Spier, anthropologists studied aboriginal cultures, while "questions of the integration of aboriginal cultures with our own had best be left to the sociologists."<sup>185</sup> In March 1936 Herskovits wrote a blistering letter to Spier, attacking him for his decision. He told Spier that he was off base in rejecting acculturation studies, noting that many prominent American anthropologists — including Boas, Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, and Clark Wissler — agreed with Herskovits that acculturation studies were absolutely part of anthropology. Herskovits

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rejected Spier's view that studies of culture contact between Europeans and nonliterate cultures belonged to sociology. In fact, Herskovits argued, sociologists generally eschewed acculturation studies. Moreover, he maintained that anthropology and sociology differed in "techniques as well as data." Sociologists studied "the social organisation of our own civilization. Certainly, the difference between anthropology and sociology is more than the difference between a loin cloth and a pair of trousers." To protest Spier's decision, Herskovits resigned his position as associate editor of the *American Anthropologist*. Furthermore, Herskovits promised to bring up the issue "at the next annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association [AAA]."<sup>186</sup>

Spier and AAA secretary John M. Cooper convinced Herskovits to withdraw his resignation pending the association's annual meeting in December. At that meeting Herskovits delivered a paper entitled "The Significance of the Study of Acculturation for Anthropology," which argued that acculturation studies were central to anthropological study.<sup>187</sup> Herskovits maintained that acculturation studies were absolutely essential to illuminate the dynamics of culture change. Acculturation studies permitted anthropologists to examine the results of culture contact under conditions where the historical interaction between various cultural groups was known. Therefore anthropologists could combine ethnography and historical research to examine culture change over time. Moreover, if anthropologists concentrated exclusively on isolated societies, they would delimit the discipline to a small portion of the world's cultures.<sup>188</sup> Following Herskovits's statement, Spier asked the members to decide whether acculturation studies should be included in the journal. A motion was made and seconded that acculturation studies should be included. That settled the issue. (No vote was held.) Immediately, the *American Anthropologist*, under Spier's editorship, began to include acculturation articles, including two by Herskovits; one was the paper he had read at the annual meeting.<sup>189</sup> Thus Spier acquiesced to the view of Herskovits and other anthropologists who took a broader approach to cultural anthropology than he did.

The ssRC subcommittee's plan to publish an extensive report on acculturation, however, was derailed by a dispute between Herskovits and ssRC executive director Robert Crane.<sup>190</sup> Herskovits and Crane had very different ideas about what form the acculturation report should take. Herskovits wanted to publish a full-length book based on his own re-

search and the discussions of the SSRC subcommittee. Crane argued that Herskovits's manuscript did "not fit the purpose of the Council in undertaking these nuclear enterprises and is therefore not suitable for publication by the Council, which is not in the publishing business but issues only materials calculated to forward its own plans." Crane admitted that it was possible that he had never conveyed clearly the council's purpose to Herskovits.<sup>191</sup> Meanwhile, Herskovits believed that Crane had deliberately ignored the acculturation project and thus caused the completion of the project to be severely delayed.<sup>192</sup> In November 1937 Herskovits complained to Donald Young of the SSRC that Crane was "too busy during the past three years to find any time at all for anything having to do with acculturation or the work of the Committee." Crane's failure to give any feedback to Herskovits on the memorandum delayed progress on the project. Moreover, Herskovits recoiled at Crane's plan to rewrite the memorandum that Herskovits had "slaved" over the previous summer. Therefore, because he was "now . . . too busy at my *work*," Herskovits wanted to withdraw from the project entirely and return the SSRC's funds unless his memorandum was sent to the printers within a month.<sup>193</sup> After Young showed Herskovits's letter to Crane, the executive director wrote Herskovits, "It would be difficult to devise another document as well calculated to alienate your best friend." Crane concluded, "If you are incapable of looking at this matter objectively, but must put it on personal grounds, I should say that it is I who have been obdurate in this matter. Young has exhausted every wile to induce me to publish the manuscript, and [Robert] Redfield was quite ready when I objected."<sup>194</sup> As a result of the Crane-Herskovits dispute, the SSRC's subcommittee on acculturation was terminated.<sup>195</sup>

Following the dispute with Crane, Herskovits published *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact* (1938) under his own name. Although the book was partly funded by the SSRC, Herskovits took sole responsibility for the conclusions.<sup>196</sup> In *Acculturation*, Herskovits clearly distinguished between various types of culture contact. He defined diffusion as the transfer of cultural traits from one group to another. Assimilation meant a "synthesis of culture" after culture contact between two or more groups. Herskovits defined acculturation as a process in which mutual cultural influence resulted from extended contact between two cultural groups.<sup>197</sup>

Herskovits also distinguished the methods employed by anthropolo-

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gists in studies of diffusion and acculturation. Diffusion studies generally assumed historical culture contact between two peoples, based on the discovery of similar cultural traits. Ethnocentric assumptions often led to the supposition that culture was being diffused in one direction, from the West to a nonliterate culture. By contrast, acculturation studies employed historical reconstructions rather than distributional analyses of cultural traits.<sup>198</sup> By emphasizing the process of acculturation in his research and not assimilation or diffusion, Herskovits underscored the strength and complexity of diverse cultures, whether literate or nonliterate, Western or non-Western. His research in African and African American cultures had demonstrated the endurance and influence of nonliterate cultures. This view was evidence of his shift from assimilationism, which implied a cultural chauvinist perspective, to cultural pluralism, based on a relativist perspective.

In his study of acculturation, Herskovits also cautioned anthropologists against their own ethnocentrism, which had made the view that European cultures would overwhelm native cultures due to their superiority the dominant one. Therefore he argued that studies of culture contact should first be undertaken where Europe or America was not involved to guard against the bias of Western anthropologists who viewed their cultures as superior and bound to overtake inferior native cultures.<sup>199</sup>

In 1941 Herskovits expressed his gratification that his book on acculturation had stimulated so much excellent research. He observed that "every project that I suggested, as well as many more, are either being worked at or have been done." In addition, he believed that his work had "sharpened the concept of the importance of studying cultural process here and now and the use of historic as well as ethnographic materials to a degree that I should not have thought possible."<sup>200</sup> Over the next two decades, acculturation studies became a key component of anthropology, with studies of culture change pursued among countless cultures, including those in Mexico, the Philippines, India, China, Japan, North America, Polynesia, and Africa.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, Herskovits's definition of acculturation became an accepted one. In 1964 the *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* defined acculturation as "that process of cultural change (q.v.) in which more or less continuous contact between two or more culturally distinct groups results in one group taking over elements of the culture of the other group or groups."<sup>202</sup> The definition also noted that ac-



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culturation “makes one group’s culture the point of reference, and focuses upon the events and processes by which that group responds to more or less continuous contact by variously accepting, reformulating, or rejecting elements of the other culture or cultures.”<sup>203</sup> Assimilation became defined as “the way in which the minority becomes incorporated into the system of social relations which constitute the greater society.” This differentiated assimilation from acculturation, which referred to cultural change and not social incorporation.<sup>204</sup> Outside of anthropology, however, acculturation had additional meanings that approximated some of the earlier definitions that were similar to assimilation. For instance, acculturation sometimes meant “the transmission of culture from generation to generation; . . . the adaptation of an out-group member to the behaviour pattern of an in-group; and . . . the impact of a central authority or an urban community upon isolated rural groups.”<sup>205</sup>

From 1928 to 1942 Herskovits’s field trips to Suriname, Dahomey, Haiti, Trinidad, and Brazil transformed his views on the dynamics of cultural interaction and cultural change. These field trips convinced Herskovits of the error of his early assimilationist views. He now embraced the notion of strong and resilient African and African American cultures. In doing so, Herskovits moved from a universalist emphasis on one-sided assimilation to a particularist emphasis on diversity. While underscoring the African influence in his fieldwork, Herskovits also established the diversity of African and African American cultures. The cultures of Suriname, Dahomey, Haiti, Trinidad, and Brazil were different due to their unique histories and influences. These studies led Herskovits to develop a theory of acculturation that embraced a dynamic view of cultural change and rejected cultural definitions based on ethnocentric biases. As he completed new field studies and collected additional evidence to support his theories of African cultural influence in the Americas, criticism began to mount. Moreover, criticism multiplied when Herskovits began to emphasize his belief that African culture influenced black culture in the United States. When he published *The Myth of the Negro Past* in 1941, as part of the Carnegie Corporation’s Study of the Negro in America, the criticism from liberal assimilationist scholars rose to monumental proportions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Subverting the Myth of the Negro Past

The myth of the Negro past is one of the principal supports of race prejudice in this country. — Melville J. Herskovits

A race of people is like an individual man; until it uses its own talent, takes pride in its own history, expresses its own culture, affirms its own selfhood, it can never fulfill itself. — Malcolm X

**H**ERSKOVITS'S FIFTEEN YEARS of research on black cultures culminated with *The Myth of the Negro Past*, the first publication of the Carnegie Corporation's Study of the American Negro. The Carnegie study — the most extensive study of African Americans during this era — and the Herskovits work that emerged from that study set the terms of debate between two very different ways of thinking about race and society. In proclaiming the complexity, dynamism, and enduring African influence on African Americans, Herskovits challenged those who maligned black culture and African culture. By contrast, the Carnegie study — while making the case for the assimilation of African Americans into mainstream American society — embraced the view of many prominent liberal black and white scholars who rejected Herskovits's conclusion that the lifestyle of African Americans was strongly influenced by Africa. Indeed, these scholars, including E. Franklin Frazier and Guy B. Johnson, argued that there was no such thing as black culture. They rejected Herskovits's argument that evidence of the complexity and strength of ancestral African societies would help undermine race prejudice against African Americans. Instead, they maintained that by providing evidence of differences between the lifestyles of blacks and whites, Herskovits furnished support for those who justified racial segre-

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gation based on the view that blacks were incapable of assimilating into mainstream American society.

In contrast, Herskovits insisted that black assimilation into American culture and preservation of the African heritage were not mutually exclusive. Nor was cultural change a one-way street. Just as blacks had been influenced by white American culture, so had black culture, with its African-influenced cultural traits, contributed to white American culture. Herskovits maintained that African Americans were just “like other folk in their ability to assimilate what is new to them and to give of their aboriginal endowments to those with whom they have come into contact.”<sup>1</sup>

The Carnegie Corporation study evolved from a suggestion in 1935 by Newton Baker, a Carnegie Corporation trustee and the former secretary of war under Woodrow Wilson, that the Executive Committee of the Carnegie Corporation consider a study of “the general question of negro education and negro problems, with special reference to conditions in the Northern states.”<sup>2</sup> Under the leadership of former Columbia College dean and ex-assistant secretary of war Frederick P. Keppel, from 1923 to 1942 the Carnegie Corporation — formed in 1911 by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie — focused its energies on finding “ways to disseminate traditionally elite culture to a large number of people.” Toward that end, the corporation funded libraries, education, and the arts. Baker’s recommendation was driven by his concern about the Great Depression’s deleterious impact on the already dire economic conditions experienced by many African Americans. Fearing that blacks’ feelings of desperation would ignite race riots, Baker — who opposed the federal intervention of the New Deal — believed that localities and philanthropies should take action. Baker and Keppel supported the study because they believed that by advancing Negro education, the Carnegie Corporation, which had previously attached little significance to black issues, could help alleviate the poor economic and social conditions experienced by most African Americans.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, Herskovits had submitted a funding request to the Carnegie Corporation for extensive study of blacks in Africa and the Americas.<sup>4</sup> This request, combined with Herskovits’s reputation with foundation officials as a key scholar of Negro studies, brought Herskovits to the

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attention of the Carnegie Corporation as one who should be consulted about Baker's proposal.

Consequently, in December 1936 Keppel contacted Herskovits to discuss the projected study of the "Negro Problem." Keppel maintained that present research on Negroes was insufficient and should be shifted toward "solving the practical problems of race relations." He wanted to employ a foreigner to direct the study, to ensure an objective view by a detached observer without the preconceptions of someone already engaged in the issue.<sup>5</sup> When Keppel asked Herskovits whether he would be interested in directing the research part of the study and working with a European director, Herskovits expressed interest, with the proviso that he would not work with a European director who came from an imperialist country.<sup>6</sup> Herskovits argued that association with imperialism would damage a director's credibility as an objective observer. Herskovits and sociologist Donald Young later urged Keppel, without success, to hire an American research director who was well versed "in the social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology."<sup>7</sup> Herskovits also recommended black economist Abram Harris for the study's advisory committee, emphasizing that foundations should stop relegating blacks to insignificant roles with no power.<sup>8</sup>

Before the decision to hire a foreign director was made, Herskovits was briefly considered. He received mixed reviews from various academics and foundation officials. Columbia University psychologist Edward L. Thorndike recommended Herskovits, and Alfred Kidder of the National Research Council also endorsed him. Robert Crane, president of the Social Science Research Council—who was in the midst of the dispute with Herskovits about the acculturation report—maintained that Herskovits was "very able but not always tactful."<sup>9</sup> Geologist John Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institute of Washington, doubted the validity of Herskovits's research on Africanisms.<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately, Keppel decided to hire a foreign director. He believed that "all of the American reformers and scholars interested in the race question were 'influenced by emotional factors of one type or another, and many are also under the influence of earlier environmental conditions, family or community traditions of the abolitionist movement on the one hand or of the old regime of the South on the other.'<sup>11</sup> Apparently, Herskovits's advice influenced Keppel to reject candidates from imperialist countries. When he offered the position to Swedish economist Karl

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Gunnar Myrdal in August 1937, Keppel explained, "We have thought . . . that it would be well to seek a man in a non-imperial country with no background of domination of one race over another."<sup>12</sup>

Herskovits and Young saw the Carnegie study as a unique opportunity to steer the Carnegie Corporation toward their intellectual perspectives, which generally coincided. They hoped the project would provide them the opportunity to conduct extensive sociological and cultural studies of African Americans. Toward that end, Herskovits and Young crafted a long letter to Keppel in January 1937, giving detailed recommendations for the proposed study.<sup>13</sup> Hoping to convince Keppel to structure a more extensive and intensive study than originally planned, Herskovits and Young advised Keppel that substantial documentary and field research into black history, culture, physical anthropology, and psychology was required before solutions could be considered. This research would help explain the differences between blacks and whites in housing, income, education, crime, and family desertion.<sup>14</sup> To further understand black culture, additional research into African and early American influences and comparative studies of blacks in other New World societies were needed.<sup>15</sup> The two scholars also urged study of "[t]he physical condition of the American Negro." They planned extensive anthropometric measurements and study of health records and color differences among African Americans, because these were important "factor[s] in their social adjustment, both with other Negroes and with white people." They argued that studying "Negro cultural differences as a factor in social adjustment . . . is the part of the proposed project most promising of a unique contribution both to the understanding and to the practical improvement of race relations."<sup>16</sup>

After agreeing to direct the study in October 1937, Myrdal told Keppel that he believed it was unlikely that this study could "'solve' the Negro-Problem in America." Myrdal declared that "the chief interest of the Study must . . . be the investigation of the facts."<sup>17</sup> Myrdal was officially appointed to head the Carnegie study in 1938 and arrived in the United States that fall.<sup>18</sup> The Carnegie Corporation approved initial funding of \$25,000 for the study in January 1938. Although the Carnegie Corporation did not set a total budget for the two-to-three-year study, the foundation hoped that following Myrdal's preliminary investigations, the budget could be kept under \$75,000.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, the project cost \$250,000.<sup>20</sup>

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From the outset, Herskovits's relationship with Myrdal was strained by their different approaches to the study. Based on his belief that blacks could not be understood in isolation from the larger American scene, Myrdal sought a holistic approach to the "Negro problem." Therefore the study would seek to understand whites and blacks, American culture and black institutions, in order to reach conclusions about the nature of the problem.<sup>21</sup> Myrdal decided that due to time restrictions, the scope of the study should be confined to blacks in America and not expanded to include blacks in other countries or other minorities in America. In addition, Myrdal favored limited discussion of historical background, and then only when it was "absolutely necessary to explain the actual situation."<sup>22</sup> These decisions deviated from Herskovits's view that knowledge of the African heritage and the American historical influence was necessary for a thorough understanding of black culture.

In the early stages of the study, Myrdal appeared somewhat conflicted regarding how much space to devote to the question of the African cultural influence. In an extensive memo to Keppel, Myrdal maintained that if, as he already believed based on preliminary observations, "the cultural heritage from Africa should be insignificant . . . this problem . . . could be disposed of in this Study by a short documented summary." Similarly, although he included a community study or two on Negro culture, Myrdal omitted a study of the African heritage of black Americans from his list of twenty-three special study projects.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, Myrdal asserted that "the cultural heritage from Africa" and the remains "of that heritage in the modern American Negro . . . should occupy a prominent position in this study. . . . The historical summary in this instance should be directed mainly into the field of cultural anthropology."<sup>24</sup>

During the planning stages of the study, Herskovits's attempts to convince Myrdal to include more extensive research on black culture met with little success. In a February 1939 meeting, Herskovits, who viewed the study as an opportunity to continue and extend many of his own lines of research, argued that Myrdal's plans improperly omitted research on "the sociological implications of race crossing mainly concerning the ideas and conceptions on miscegenation." Herskovits advised Myrdal that certain related phenomena, such as "Negroes passing for whites . . . [and] the myths of the Negroes' particular sexual abilities," should be studied. Herskovits also proposed research into the black cultural influence — particularly in music, religion, and language — on American

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culture.<sup>25</sup> He wanted to conduct extensive cultural studies of black American communities. Concerned about time and financial constraints and unimpressed by Herskovits's suggestions, Myrdal rejected Herskovits's proposal for extensive fieldwork. In addition, Myrdal expressed irritation with what he viewed as Herskovits's overemphasis on the African heritage.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Myrdal told Charles Dollard of the Carnegie Corporation that he believed Herskovits was excessively biased on the question of African survivals.<sup>27</sup>

In June 1939, despite their differences, Myrdal and Herskovits agreed that Herskovits would write an extended treatment on his "theories and hypotheses concerning the African influence on Negro culture in America" and "a shorter statement of the influence on the bi-racial culture situation in America and the present interest in African art and culture and Negro achievements in art, science and athletics."<sup>28</sup> Despite this agreement, Myrdal and Herskovits argued about the question of additional fieldwork. Herskovits insisted that in order to write about black culture in the Americas, he would have to undertake extensive fieldwork in southern black communities.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, Myrdal, while admitting that such fieldwork would be helpful, refused to approve any fieldwork due to time constraints on the study. Instead, Myrdal suggested that Herskovits write a preliminary research memorandum detailing his analysis of black culture based on the present state of the literature.<sup>30</sup> Herskovits finally agreed, with the understanding that due to the time constraints and lack of additional fieldwork, his memorandum could not be definitive; in his view, a "definitive study" of American black culture was at least ten years away.<sup>31</sup> Thus Herskovits's persistence helped persuade Myrdal to authorize a more extensive study of the African heritage than he had previously supported. But Myrdal's reasons for doing so were based more on expedience than conviction. Indeed, the University of North Carolina sociologist and deputy director of the Carnegie study, Guy B. Johnson, later commented, "It was much more important just to feel that he [Myrdal] had got this man [Herskovits] to participate than to get what he was actually going to contribute to the study."<sup>32</sup> Hence, Myrdal's acquiescence was due, at least in part, to Herskovits's prominence in the field of Negro studies. In order to mute Herskovits's criticism of the study, it was necessary to include him in it.

Despite his authorization of Herskovits's memorandum, Myrdal had already decided the question of black culture in his own mind. In early

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1939 he wrote, "It is obvious that the personality traits of Negroes show exceptionally marked differences from white American culture in relation to sexual norms and family patterns; although certainly these differences are smaller when the Negro group is split up into various social classes and the comparisons made only with the corresponding classes of white population. These cultural traits are apparently very much determined by traditions hanging over from slavery."<sup>33</sup> Later that year Myrdal asserted that the most important influence on Negro culture in the United States was "the cultural isolation, forced upon the Negro first by slavery and thereafter by segregation and discrimination and generally the peculiar economic, social, and educational status in which he has been held." Myrdal did allow that African culture and, as a result of immigration, other Negro cultures in the Americas would have had a secondary influence.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, contrary to Herskovits's views, Myrdal's firsthand observations convinced him that African American culture was essentially the same as white American culture. For Myrdal, the main difference between black and white Americans was the greater presence of social pathologies, such as broken families, crime, disease, poverty, and unemployment among blacks, due to racial discrimination.<sup>35</sup>

Several black intellectuals involved in the study, especially two Howard University scholars—political scientist Ralph Bunche and sociologist E. Franklin Frazier—reinforced Myrdal's perceptions of black culture. To understand why Bunche and Frazier supported the notion that black culture and white culture were essentially the same, it is necessary to review their part in the ongoing debate among black intellectuals on the best strategy for black advancement. During the 1930s a new generation of black intellectuals—led by Bunche, Frazier, and economist Abram Harris—formulated a different analysis of race relations in America from that of the older black intellectuals, led by Du Bois and Woodson. The younger generation, influenced by the catastrophic impact of the Great Depression, employed a Marxist critique of American capitalism as exploitative of both white and black workers. In order to improve the lot of African Americans, they argued for an interracial working-class alliance based on a common class interest. These younger intellectuals sought to minimize racial and cultural differences between blacks and whites in hopes of advancing toward their goal.<sup>36</sup>

The radical views of the younger intellectuals stood in stark contrast



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with those of the older generation, whose long experience with segregation and racial oppression convinced them to reject an interracial strategy. In 1933, for example, Du Bois wrote, "There seems no hope that America in our day will yield in its color or race hatred any substantial ground."<sup>37</sup> Therefore Du Bois argued that "the race-conscious black man cooperating together in his own institutions and movements" would "eventually emancipate the colored race."<sup>38</sup> In a similar way, the post-World War I disgust of African Americans with heightened racial oppression in the face of black patriotic support during the war had contributed to the popularity of Marcus Garvey's black nationalist movement during the 1920s.<sup>39</sup> Like Garveyites ten years earlier, Woodson and Du Bois saw little hope of an interracial class alliance. Instead, Woodson sought to improve the self-respect of African Americans by publicizing black accomplishments. For Woodson, this was the first step toward advancing the cause of African Americans.<sup>40</sup> During the late 1920s and early 1930s Du Bois changed his strategy for improving the plight of African Americans from an emphasis on attacking segregation and the denial of political rights to support for separate economic development for blacks. Toward that end, Du Bois proposed the establishment of consumers' and producers' cooperatives.<sup>41</sup> Thus, while Du Bois and Woodson emphasized race accomplishments and race solidarity, Bunche, Frazier, and Harris rejected black nationalism, stressed integration, and diminished the focus on race.

Bunche particularly minimized black cultural distinctiveness. He believed that black distinctiveness was due entirely to skin color and the resulting racial discrimination that caused social and economic inequality. Bunche argued that scholars who focused on black cultural or racial distinctiveness emphasized racial differences and reinforced those who sought to perpetuate inequality. He believed that racial differences were only a small part of the reason for inequality. Instead, employing a Marxist perspective, Bunche maintained that inequities arising from the capitalist economy were the main causes of racial and economic inequality. Moreover, the best hope to end racial and economic inequality was the formation of an interracial working-class movement. Toward that end, Bunche helped form the National Negro Congress, which among other civil rights initiatives supported racially integrated labor unions.<sup>42</sup>

Although in his early studies Frazier emphasized the distinctiveness of black folk culture, by the late 1930s he "rejected the cultivation of

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African-American traditions.<sup>43</sup> During the 1920s Frazier had argued that southern black folk culture “contained some traditions that African-Americans might draw upon to strengthen their sense of solidarity and collective struggle.”<sup>44</sup> By 1934, however, Frazier concluded, “the most conspicuous thing about the Negro is his lack of a culture.”<sup>45</sup> Although in his major work, *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939), Frazier provided a complex interpretation of black family development that explained that during the major historical transitions for African Americans—from slavery to emancipation, rural to urban migration—black families went through a normal process of disorganization and then reorganization, much of his work stressed disorganization.<sup>46</sup> Reflecting a hierarchical notion of culture in opposition to the idea of cultural relativism, Frazier argued that “the Negro stripped of his relatively simple preliterate culture in which he was nurtured . . . has gradually taken over the more sophisticated American culture.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Frazier asserted that African American economic progress had been slowed by the lack of a cultural identity. In order to uplift themselves, African Americans needed to adopt white American culture and moral values, with the long-range goal of assimilating into white culture. Although this formulation rejected white biological superiority, it confirmed white cultural superiority.

Throughout his career Frazier rejected the influence of African culture on American blacks. In 1934 he maintained that “the Negro, owing to the method by which he was captured in Africa and subsequently enslaved in America, was practically stripped of his cultural heritage. . . . [I]t appears incontrovertible that no traces of the element of culture, the social structure . . . can be found among American Negroes which can be attributed to African origin.” Instead, Frazier argued that the “traditions and culture of the American Negro have grown out of his experiences in America and have derived their meaning and significance from the same source.”<sup>48</sup>

Frazier’s denial of the existence of a separate black culture based in part on the African heritage mirrored the view of his mentor, the white sociologist of the University of Chicago, Robert Park. In 1934 Park maintained that “the Negro community is so completely interpenetrated and dependent upon the dominant white community that it is difficult to conceive it as having any independent existence.”<sup>49</sup> He asserted that “the Negro, . . . [is] culturally . . . a purely native product,” that is, with no

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African influence upon black American culture.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Park argued that “the fact that the Negro brought with him from Africa so little tradition which he was able to transmit and perpetuate on American soil makes that race unique among all peoples of our cosmopolitan population.”<sup>51</sup> Thus Park argued that blacks uniquely lacked a cultural heritage, perpetuating the notion that they were culturally inferior to other groups who had come to the United States.

Alain Locke, who had championed the New Negro during the 1920s, suggested a more complex view of black culture than Frazier or Bunche. Locke’s 1928 publication, “The Negro’s Contribution to American Art and Literature,” took a midway position between Frazier and Herskovits. Locke maintained that black folk culture in the South represented a syncretism of African and Anglo-American cultures, with a significant African influence but without specific African cultural survivals in evidence. During the 1930s Locke, influenced by the younger black intellectuals’ Marxist analysis, sought to combine his cultural perspective with a class analysis. Although he counseled the younger scholars not to ignore the importance of culture, Locke sympathized with their Marxist views. In fact, Locke’s publishing company issued *A World View of Race* (1936), in which Bunche offered a Marxist critique of race, arguing that racial conflict was caused by political and economic forces.<sup>52</sup> By the 1930s Locke was not content with an unadorned emphasis on distinctive black culture. He advised Myrdal that “the widespread notion of Negro culture as separate and sui generis is very unscientific and contrary to fact.” Locke also reproved Herskovits for his “dogmatic obsession” with African cultural survivals.<sup>53</sup>

Other important black intellectuals rejected the Herskovits thesis. V. P. Franklin has observed that Richard Wright, author of the acclaimed novel *Native Son*, embraced the view of black culture as pathological. In 1940 “Wright asserted that . . . ‘What culture we did have when we were torn from Africa was taken from us. . . . We possess no remembered cushion of culture upon which we can lay our tired heads and dream of our superiority. . . . In *Native Son* I tried to show that a man, bereft of a culture and unanchored by property, can travel but one path if he reacts positively but unthinkingly to the prizes and goals of civilization; and that one path is emotionally blind rebellion.’”<sup>54</sup>

Like the Howard University group, the white sociologist and deputy director of the Carnegie study, Guy B. Johnson, also counseled Myrdal

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to reject Herskovits's thesis. For over a decade Johnson had differed with Herskovits on the question of African survivals. In his 1930 study of the culture of blacks on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, Johnson concluded that African traditions were nonexistent. Moreover, Johnson argued that the inhabitants' Gullah dialect and their music—the spirituals—were derived from English antecedents. Sarah Thuesen has observed that Johnson believed that an emphasis on differences between blacks and whites would retard the assimilation of blacks into American society.<sup>55</sup> Herskovits called Johnson's book "a pretty thin job" and maintained that Johnson's analysis "of the derivations of the Negro dialect seems pretty weak to me since he apparently was totally unequipped to even find the numerous grammars and dictionaries of West African language—let alone make reference to them."<sup>56</sup> Herskovits believed that Johnson had "been so intent on the . . . hypothesis of European origin" that he had missed the African influence on the folklore and music of the islanders.<sup>57</sup>

Johnson now argued that slavery was the key influence on black culture and particularly on "the present sexual customs and family structure among Negroes." He advised Myrdal that "African influences, or the possibility of such influences, should at least be mentioned" but should not be overstated. Johnson also suggested that perhaps "some peculiar Negro 'ethos'" accounted for "some of the deviations of Negro patterns from the common American patterns."<sup>58</sup> His willingness to consider the African cultural influence is indicative of the impact that Herskovits's work on Haiti had on Johnson's thinking.

By January 1940 Herskovits had prepared his "Preliminary Memorandum on the Problem of African Survivals," setting out the essence of his argument and interpretation. He asserted that the debate on black culture was polarized by the extreme positions taken on the question of African survivals. Taking a middle position, Herskovits proclaimed, "The most logical possibility, indeed, seems curiously enough to have received the slightest attention. This is the possibility that much of present-day Negro culture is . . . neither purely African nor purely European, but represents, in varying degrees, a syncretism of the dual heritage of Europe and Africa."<sup>59</sup>

Herskovits then refuted the presentist focus of most studies of the "Negro problem," arguing for "a thoroughgoing historical attack on the Negro problem. In the tangled skein of American Negro culture history,

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the African threads are meaningless unless we arrive at a comprehension of the mechanisms whereby such Africanisms as may be discovered were perpetuated, and how they were rewoven with yarn from other sources.” Herskovits maintained that racial prejudice was caused by socioeconomic and psychological factors. The socioeconomic factors have been well studied and “insofar as programs of action are concerned . . . can thus be reasonably regarded as susceptible of effective attack through the operation of short-time meliorative projects.”<sup>60</sup>

In contrast, Herskovits argued, “the psychological [and historical] basis of the race-problem,” which was “deeply entrenched” and “far more insidious” than the socioeconomic factors, had been largely ignored. Herskovits believed that the psychological foundations of American race relations were the keys to understanding the perpetuation of “all shades of superiority-inferiority rankings given whites and Negroes by members of both groups.” Therefore it was absolutely necessary that researchers intensely scrutinize the African heritage of New World Negroes.<sup>61</sup> Such work would undercut stereotypical views of African and African American culture as inferior. The knowledge of strong African cultures would improve blacks’ self-image and would help dispel whites’ racist belief in black inferiority. Indeed, the Herskovitses had long believed that illuminating African history and culture would help to undermine African Americans’ feelings of inferiority about their ancestral heritage. During their second Suriname trip in 1929, Frances Herskovits told her husband that showing movies of Africa to Suriname villagers would “do wonders for the morale of these people for them to understand the great African kingdoms to which they are related.”<sup>62</sup>

In his June 1940 memorandum, Herskovits summed up five major components of the myth of the Negro past that had been used to justify black inferiority:

- 1) Negroes are naturally of a childlike character . . . ;
- 2) only the poorer stock of Africa was enslaved . . . ;
- 3) since Negroes were brought from all parts of the African continent . . . and, as a matter of policy, were distributed in the New World so as to lose tribal identity, no least common denominator of understanding or behavior could have possibly been worked out by them;
- 4) the cultures of Africa were so savage . . . that the patent superiority of European custom as observed in the behavior of their masters, would

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have caused and actually did cause them to give up such aboriginal traditions as they may have otherwise desired to preserve; from which it follows,

5) That the Negro is a man without a past.<sup>63</sup>

Herskovits contended that generations of so-called experts on Negroes, with no knowledge of Africa, “have reiterated, in whole or in part . . . the assumptions outlined above.” He indicted those, like nineteenth-century slave owner, doctor, and ethnologist Josiah Clark Nott, who perpetuated black stereotypes based on their belief in the biological inferiority of Negroes. Similarly, Herskovits admonished twentieth-century scholars, such as sociologists Jerome Dowd, E. Franklin Frazier, Charles S. Johnson, Guy B. Johnson, Howard W. Odum, Robert Park, E. B. Reuter, W. D. Weatherford, and T. J. Woofter Jr. and historian U. B. Phillips, who devalued Negro culture and African culture. Herskovits maintained that “all have contributed to the perpetuation of the legend concerning the quality and lack of tenaciousness of Negro aboriginal endowment.”<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, Herskovits also cautioned against unquestioning acceptance of the positions of Du Bois and Woodson, who, like Herskovits, championed the African heritage of American Negroes.<sup>65</sup> As early as 1897 Du Bois had rejected assimilationism. Moreover, in two of his Atlanta University publications, “The Negro Church” (1903) and “The Negro American Family” (1908), Du Bois related black religion and family institutions to the African heritage.<sup>66</sup> In addition, in 1915 Du Bois published *The Negro*, which synthesized recent scholarship on African history and African American history, again emphasizing strong African cultures and their influence on black Americans.<sup>67</sup>

Woodson was also a trailblazer in emphasizing African culture and its impact in the Americas. Especially during the 1920s and 1930s, Woodson promoted projects and wrote books that focused on Africa and its cultural influence on American blacks.<sup>68</sup> In 1936 Woodson published *The African Background Outlined or Handbook for the Study of the Negro*, which detailed African history and culture and its influence on African American history and culture. Woodson included religious beliefs, language, folktales, and secret societies as examples of African survivals among American blacks.<sup>69</sup>

Despite their concurrence on the question of African survivals, Hers-

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kovits argued that the views of Woodson and Du Bois must be considered “inadmissible” because they were based on “opinion and insufficient source materials.”<sup>70</sup> Herskovits did not view either Woodson or Du Bois as objective scholars. He believed that both Woodson and Du Bois were more interested in racial uplift than detached scholarship and compromised their scholarship by engaging in polemics.<sup>71</sup> Herskovits, who knew of Du Bois’s early emphasis on the African heritage of American Negroes, later commented: “Du Bois has always been interested in the African background, perhaps more romantically than in terms of serious scholarship, but it is important that he did take them into account, however inadequately, in discussing the situation of the Negro in this country at the time when he wrote.”<sup>72</sup> Herskovits maintained that neither Du Bois nor Woodson had conducted extensive fieldwork among Africans or African Americans, and consequently their work was questionable as scholarship. In fact, Du Bois had done extensive fieldwork among African Americans, work that culminated in his Atlanta University studies and his study of blacks in Philadelphia.<sup>73</sup>

Herskovits asserted that direct comparison of American Negro culture and West African cultures would not yield any reasonable conclusions about African cultural influences in America because the “American Negro has been too deeply acculturated to European patterns of behavior and the ancestral cultures are in many cases too complex.” He argued that “the only workable method of finding and analyzing Africanisms in American Negro life with any degree of scientific accuracy is to follow these customs through the New World where, in the laboratory made available by the accident of history, one can see certain customs that deviate from the common African pattern becoming less and less like what is found in this country until, in cultures like those of the Haitian or Cuban or Brazilian or Guiana Negroes, their African nature becomes recognizable and the task of assessing their place in related African societies can be undertaken.”<sup>74</sup> Thus Herskovits maintained that his own method of analyzing African American cultures was the only viable one. In fact, Herskovits had done little fieldwork in the United States, and his source materials on American blacks were quite limited. Anthropologist St. Clair Drake later commented that Herskovits’s lack of field research in black communities in the United States was “understandable in view of the fact that anthropologists generally did not carry out participant-observation studies in their own societies.”<sup>75</sup> Nonethe-

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less, Herskovits's observations of black American culture had provided him anecdotal evidence of African cultural survivals. For example, in 1929 the Herskovitises went "to a [black] Sanctified Church . . . in Evanston [where they] found [what] was practically a Param[ar]ibo [Suriname] 'winti' dance. The same dancing, the same trembling of the body, the hand-clapping, the speaking of 'tongues', the fixed, vacant expression of spirit-possession. It was astonishing."<sup>76</sup>

Herskovits concluded his preliminary memorandum by emphasizing the sociopolitical importance of reexamining black culture and history. Black cultural traits, including "possession in Negro churches," motor behavior, folktales, funeral rites, and "structural features of Negro songs," must be reanalyzed to determine their cultural and historical origins and influences. Furthermore, black history must be reassessed to determine how blacks reacted to enslavement, from which regions African were enslaved, and how African culture influenced the slaves. The results of this study would have broad significance for African Americans. Herskovits believed that the evidence would demonstrate the creativity and agency of African Americans in shaping their own destinies against the confines of slavery and oppression. He maintained that "until the Negro faces his African endowments and learns to value them, he must experience many of the additional handicaps that derive from the socialized ambivalence towards his position in society, and his own group, which has been found to operate so sharply in a country like Haiti."<sup>77</sup> Herskovits argued that the uncovering of a usable past would ultimately free African Americans from this socialized ambivalence toward their own historical roots.

In making the argument that knowledge of the dynamism and strength of African cultures would improve African Americans' self-respect, Herskovits now deviated from his longtime advocacy of the pursuit of the truth regardless of any political motives. While Herskovits had criticized Du Bois and Woodson for permitting their interest in racial uplift to compromise their objectivity, Herskovits was now overtly stating that his work, too, was motivated, at least in part, by the pursuit of racial uplift.

Although Guy Johnson liked Herskovits's plan to write a memorandum on the African cultural influence on black Americans, he criticized Herskovits's conclusions. Johnson told Myrdal that there was little evidence of scholarly support for the myths that Herskovits had enumerated regarding the black past. Johnson based this on his belief that a



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writer's "passing comments on . . . African heritages" often "play no necessary role in the writers' arguments" and thus should be omitted from the study. Nonetheless, Johnson wondered if "the *ideas* which Negroes have about African heritages are really more important than the heritages themselves," and he proposed a "rather intense psychological probing of several Negroes."<sup>78</sup> Herskovits rejected Johnson's criticisms on the documentation of writings supporting myths about blacks, but he did agree with Johnson's focus on blacks' ideas about their African heritage. Herskovits maintained that the practical significance of his work was precisely the value judgments about black culture made by blacks and whites.<sup>79</sup>

Myrdal's differences with Herskovits escalated in early 1940, leading Myrdal to express his irritation to Ralph Bunche: "Mel Herskovits is rather crazy at present. He sees everything in the light of African inheritance." Myrdal tried to persuade Herskovits to delete the section criticizing other scholars and to focus instead on the evidence supporting his interpretation.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, Myrdal's differences with Herskovits on the culture question and Myrdal's belief that Herskovits was excessively biased on the question of African survivals led to the exclusion of Herskovits's interpretation from the final report.<sup>81</sup>

As a result of the war in Europe, Myrdal returned to Sweden in May 1940 (he returned to the United States in March 1941), which delayed the writing of his report. In December Myrdal's associates decided to publish some of the research memoranda as separate monographs. Carnegie Corporation president Frederick Keppel asked staff members if they wished to publish their work, and Herskovits quickly responded with his "formal request for the publication of my Memorandum, 'The Myth of the Negro Past.'"<sup>82</sup>

In July 1941 a selection committee consisting of Donald Young, sociologist William F. Ogburn, and Shelby Harrison, director of the Russell Sage Foundation, reviewed the manuscripts prepared for the Negro study and chose nine, including Herskovits's *Myth*, as "worthy of independent publication." Others were eliminated on grounds that they were either biased or "substandard."<sup>83</sup>

The publication of *The Myth of the Negro Past* in 1941 marked the capstone of Herskovits's efforts to demonstrate the important influence of African culture in the Americas.<sup>84</sup> Based on his groundbreaking fieldwork in Suriname, Dahomey, Haiti, and Trinidad and extensive library

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research on black Americans, Herskovits now emphasized the complexity and strength of African American culture, which was the product of the historical interaction of people of African descent with Euro-Americans and Native Americans. At the same time, Herskovits challenged the dominant scholarly view that the cruelty of the slave trade and the superiority of Western culture had stripped African Americans of their culture. He also directly challenged both liberal assimilationists and conservative segregationists by arguing that African Americans had created their own culture by combining aspects of both Euro-American culture and African culture.<sup>85</sup> In stressing the African elements in black culture, Herskovits stood virtually alone among white social scientists.<sup>86</sup>

Herskovits's argument for Africanisms in America was based on four premises. First, African culture was strong, complex, and resilient when placed in contact with other cultures.<sup>87</sup> Second, the cultures of the area of West Africa from which the slaves were taken were similar enough "that a slave from any part of it would find little difficulty in adapting himself to whatever specific forms of African behavior he might encounter in the New World."<sup>88</sup> Third, enslaved Africans came from all segments of society, not just the weak or unintelligent, and thus brought the full complexity of West African culture with them.<sup>89</sup> Finally, African Americans incorporated Western cultural forms "while retaining inner [African] values." These African values were particularly noteworthy in African American religious practices and beliefs. Examples include the African-like "shouts" found in some black Baptist churches and the importance of the devil, which was conceptualized like the African trickster-god in black folk beliefs.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, even though African Americans adapted themselves to "outward Euro-American conventions of lodges and funerals," they retained "African patterns of mutual self-help" in matters relating to death. According to Herskovits, the retention of African values was "the most important single factor making for an understanding of the acculturative situation" for Africans in America.<sup>91</sup>

Although he conceded that there was no absolute proof of the presence of Africanisms in black American life because of the lack of sufficient historical and ethnographic research, Herskovits offered numerous examples of African-type behavior exhibited by American Negroes.<sup>92</sup> Planting methods in the Gullah Islands of South Carolina, for instance, paralleled those in Haiti and Dahomey. Herskovits also found among American Negroes the African behavior of "turning the head when laughing." The

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call-and-response style of worship in many Negro churches was an African survival. Other African-influenced cultural traits included the maternal family, burial and funeral practices, spirituals, dance, folklore, and language construction and idioms.<sup>93</sup>

In this acculturation study, Herskovits also argued that cultural exchange was a two-way street. Drawing on his earlier work on the subject, Herskovits defined acculturation as “the study of ‘those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.’”<sup>94</sup> Thus Herskovits maintained that just as European and Euro-American culture influenced Africans, African and African American culture influenced whites.<sup>95</sup>

A few years earlier Herskovits had explained the African influence on American culture. He argued that jazz and other black forms of music were influenced by African music. Herskovits based this on his recordings of the Ashanti of West Africa, who employed “part singing,” and “songs in the minor key in Dahomey.” He believed that black “work songs, songs of derision, love songs and dance songs,” which evidenced rhythms reminiscent of African music, had influenced the creation of jazz music. Herskovits also argued that the musicality and the presence of a melodic line in southern speech corresponded with West African speech’s “different tonal registers,” which give a word a particular meaning. In addition, African idioms, such as the use of the word “hot” for exciting, were found in American speech. Other Africanisms in American culture included the southern emphasis on proper manners and graciousness; the culinary practices of deep frying with fat, the use of high seasoning, and the use of the African word “gumbo”; and the religious practices of ecstatic and charismatic sects, including ritual possession and shouting.<sup>96</sup>

Herskovits argued that his findings regarding the African heritage of black Americans and their history in North America had broad practical and political significance. He believed that the reason that many black intellectuals denied or rejected the significance of the African heritage was because they had accepted the popular notion that African and African American cultures were inferior to European or Western culture. In this connection, Herskovits cited a telling statement made a few years earlier by Carter Woodson: “Negroes themselves accept as a compliment the theory of a complete break with Africa, for above all things they do

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not care to be known as resembling in any way those ‘terrible Africans.’”<sup>97</sup> In support of Woodson’s remarks, Herskovits offered a statement by E. Franklin Frazier as evidence: “If . . . the most striking thing about the Chinese is their deep culture, the most conspicuous thing about the Negro is his lack of a culture.”<sup>98</sup> Herskovits believed that this view meant that blacks were ashamed of their African heritage. He opined, “A people that denies its past cannot escape being a prey to doubt of its value today and of its potentialities for the future.”<sup>99</sup> Herskovits argued that his work would help to destroy black shame about an inadequate or nonexistent past: Giving “the Negro an appreciation of his past is to endow him with the confidence in his own position in this country and in the world.” Therefore Herskovits marshaled extensive evidence of the strength and creativity of African cultures. He also cited recent studies of slave resistance by historians Harvey Wish and Herbert Aptheker to discredit the prevalent view that the slaves contentedly accepted their condition.<sup>100</sup>

In addition, Herskovits maintained that the knowledge of complex and enduring African cultures, the African cultural heritage of New World Negroes, and the record of slave resistance would have a salutary effect on whites. Since one of the causes of white prejudice about blacks was whites’ negative evaluation of black culture and history, Herskovits believed that a more accurate account of African American history and culture would reduce white prejudice. Thus Herskovits’s work would alleviate racial problems by improving blacks’ self-respect and reducing whites’ racism.<sup>101</sup>

*The Myth of the Negro Past* proved to be Herskovits’s most controversial book. Although the book received much praise, it was also severely attacked. Not surprisingly, several scholars, including Guy Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier, who Herskovits accused of perpetuating the myth of the Negro past, criticized him for overstating the case for Africanisms.<sup>102</sup> Herbert Aptheker also attacked the book, maintaining that Herskovits’s argument for many Africanisms was based on assertion and insufficient evidence.<sup>103</sup>

Woodson and Du Bois endorsed the book’s interpretation of black culture. Woodson praised Herskovits for having “the courage to question the stereotype opinions of the past of the Negro.” Not surprisingly, Woodson agreed with Herskovits that black culture was strongly influenced by the African heritage.<sup>104</sup> Du Bois also praised the book for its

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important conclusions regarding black culture and its African heritage. The dean of black scholars agreed with Herskovits's view that the African influence was of great significance throughout the Americas and particularly in the United States.<sup>105</sup>

Similarly, anthropologists Allan Hulsizer and Ruth Benedict found Herskovits's African survivals thesis generally persuasive. Benedict's reaction constituted a change in her position on the subject. The year before in *Race: Science and Politics*, Benedict had concluded, "Their [blacks'] patterns of political, economic, and artistic behavior were forgotten — even the languages they had spoken in Africa."<sup>106</sup> Benedict, however, still was not convinced that the Africanisms were as significant as Herskovits had argued. Hulsizer and Benedict reached opposite conclusions about the practical effect on race relations of Herskovits's reinterpretation of black culture. Hulsizer agreed with Herskovits that an even-handed account of the African heritage of blacks would have a positive impact on whites' views of blacks and would help to ameliorate the "Negro inferiority complex."<sup>107</sup> But Benedict was put off by the book's "polemical tone" and was not persuaded by Herskovits's argument that an understanding of the African background was crucial to dealing with the "Negro problem." Rather, she believed that "contemporary conditions" were much more important.<sup>108</sup>

That the anthropologists were more supportive of the African survival thesis than the sociologists demonstrates the differing perspectives of the two social sciences. Sociologists, generally interested in examining contemporary institutions, usually conceived American culture as "static and undifferentiated." According to this view, a people "learned and acquired" American culture "in an essentially passive process." Thus blacks would passively assimilate mainstream American culture, "an idealized conception of the middle class."<sup>109</sup> Herskovits's position affirmed the anthropologists' more dynamic view of culture change. For anthropologists, acculturation meant a two-way exchange of culture when two peoples came into continuous cultural contact.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, anthropologists, employing the concept of cultural relativism, rejected the notion of ranking cultures in a hierarchy. From this perspective, anthropologists were inclined to accept the notion of African cultural influence while rejecting the assertion that a people's culture could be simply a pathological version of another culture. As Donald Campbell has observed, the criticism by sociologists would not have threatened Hersko-

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vits's support for his own position but would have made him think that he was even more correct, given his strong belief in the anthropological perspective.<sup>111</sup>

Nonetheless, criticism of *The Myth of the Negro Past* came fast and, occasionally, furious. Although Alain Locke endorsed Herskovits's argument that changing the public's view of African Americans' cultural heritage might undermine views of blacks as inferior, he also maintained that Herskovits was being "naive and over-optimistic" when he argued that this would change race relations in a significant way. Locke asserted that by "emphasizing the Negro's peculiar traits and their persistence in American culture," the book would "tend to reenforce rather than abate the conventional sense of difference and separateness."<sup>112</sup>

Myrdal offered his critique of *The Myth of the Negro Past* in *An American Dilemma*. In the chapter entitled "The Negro Protest," in the section on "Negro History and Culture," he characterized Herskovits as one of several "Negro History propagandists." Myrdal asserted that Herskovits had "recently rendered yeoman service to the Negro History propagandists" by his "excellent field studies of certain African and West Indian Negro groups" and by publishing *The Myth* "to glorify African culture generally and to show how it has survived in the American Negro community. He has avowedly done this to give the Negro confidence in himself and to give the white man less 'reason' to have race prejudice."<sup>113</sup> Myrdal, however, rejected Herskovits's conclusion that his study would lead to improved race relations, since Herskovits did not explicitly examine the causes of race prejudice.<sup>114</sup>

In the section of *An American Dilemma* that focused on the black community, Myrdal rejected Herskovits's interpretation of black American culture as strong, distinct, and retaining African cultural elements. Instead, Myrdal asserted that African American culture was not "independent of general American culture." Moreover, he argued, "[i]n practically all its divergencies, American Negro culture . . . is a distorted development, or a pathological condition, of the general American culture."<sup>115</sup>

Perhaps the most adamant critic of Herskovits was E. Franklin Frazier who, in his review in *Nation*, attacked *The Myth of the Negro Past* on several grounds. Frazier reproved Herskovits for failing to properly differentiate his attacks on objective scholars and racist scholars who disagreed with the African survival thesis. Frazier maintained, "The conclu-

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sions of such scholars as Robert E. Park, Edward B. Reuter, and Guy Johnson may be wrong, but they are not the result of race prejudice and should not be classed with the opinion of men who think that ‘Negroes are naturally of a childlike character.’” He also rejected Herskovits’s argument “that competent Negro scholars [who] do not find African cultural survivals in every phase of Negro life . . . are ashamed of their past.” Frazier pointed out that “many race-conscious educated Negroes with little regard for scientific knowledge [Frazier may be referring to Woodson and Du Bois here] ascribe the Negro’s contributions to his African background.”<sup>116</sup>

Although he praised Herskovits for his complex analysis of African survivals and his excellent discussions of African culture and black resistance to slavery, Frazier rejected most of Herskovits’s evidence for African survivals in the United States. While conceding that there were African survivals in language and the arts, he dismissed Herskovits’s evidence in other areas as mere “speculation that can not be regarded as scientific proof.” For example, Frazier rejected Herskovits’s explanation for the inclination of slaves to become Baptists. Herskovits suggested that the presence of many West African river cult priests among the slaves predisposed many of them to become Baptists due to the common practice of full immersion. Frazier, by contrast, argued that proselytizing of the slaves was more likely causative. He also castigated Herskovits for emphasizing the transplantation of vague underlying attitudes and values from Africa to America when he could not pinpoint specific African cultural elements in the lifestyle of black Americans.<sup>117</sup>

Frazier, who had recently published *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939), rejected Herskovits’s analysis of the African American family. While Frazier maintained that the rural black family’s tendency toward matriarchy was a vestige of slavery, Herskovits had argued that black matriarchy was an African survival that was reinforced by the breakup of families during slavery.<sup>118</sup> In this connection, Frazier charged that Herskovits’s “belief in the ‘toughness of culture’ [sometimes] . . . leads him to ascribe diametrically opposed social phenomena to African backgrounds.” According to Frazier, Herskovits attributed both the key role of mothers in families of poor blacks and the “stability of closely knit patriarchal families of acculturated mulattoes” to the African heritage.<sup>119</sup>

Finally, Frazier disagreed with Herskovits’s argument that by showing “that the Negro had a ‘cultural past’ and that the Negro’s ‘cultural past’

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still influences his behavior [this] will alter his status in American life.<sup>20</sup> He argued that although white Americans acknowledged that the Chinese and the Japanese had a cultural heritage, those two groups still suffered from discrimination. Furthermore, Frazier maintained that Herskovits's emphasis on black America's cultural differences from white America's culture lent support to those who argued that blacks would never completely acculturate to mainstream American life. Thus for Frazier, Herskovits's position implied that "even more fundamental barriers exist between blacks and whites than are generally recognized."<sup>120</sup> Guy Johnson also feared that Herskovits's interpretation would bolster segregationists. In his review of *The Myth of the Negro Past*, he explained, "One immensely practical problem is how to prevent this book, which has a high purpose and should do much good, from becoming the handmaiden of those who are looking for new justifications for the segregation and differential treatment of Negroes!"<sup>121</sup>

Frazier's belief that Herskovits's argument might provide support for white segregationists loomed large in his rejection of the Herskovits thesis. As Anthony Platt has observed, Frazier's attack on Herskovits's emphasis on Negro and African culture was based on strategy as well as scholarship. Frazier believed that emphasizing differences between the cultures of white and black Americans would confirm racist assumptions of black inferiority.<sup>122</sup> In a 1941 speech in Harlem, Frazier asserted, "[I]f whites came to believe that Negro's social behavior was rooted [in] African cultures, they would lose whatever sense of guilt they had for keeping the Negro down. Negro crime, for example, could be explained away as an 'Africanism' rather than as due to inadequate police and court protection and to inadequate education."<sup>123</sup>

Frazier was also concerned that black nationalists, who he opposed, would cite Herskovits's work in support of their goals. Platt has noted that Frazier "was opposed to the concept of a 'unique cultural development for the Negro' [as he believed it was] politically dangerous because it confirmed the prejudices of scientific racism."<sup>124</sup> Therefore Frazier downplayed the influence of black nationalist movements, including Garvey's movement, which he characterized as a short-lived movement with little support. He insisted that blacks did not believe they were part of a separate culture, nor did they generally support separatist movements.<sup>125</sup> In fact, black nationalism had enjoyed significant support in the black community since before the Civil War. During the 1920s popular support



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for Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association dwarfed that of the NAACP and other integrationist organizations.<sup>126</sup> Nonetheless, Frazier insisted "that the Negro belongs among the assimilationist rather than the pluralistic, secessionist or militant minorities."<sup>127</sup>

It is worth noting that neither Charles S. Johnson, Guy B. Johnson, nor Frazier denied that there were some African survivals present in black American culture. On one level, the argument between them and Herskovits was over the degree of the African influence. In denying the existence of a separate black culture, however, his critics inadvertently provided Herskovits with an indication that they did so not based on the evidence but because of their desire to undercut any notions that there were differences between black culture and white culture. Herskovits believed that Frazier's emphatic disagreement with his own position on the African cultural influence indicated "something of an emotional tie-up."<sup>128</sup> In general, Herskovits maintained that his critics had "the skepticism of conviction rather than of scientific method, and, therefore, tend to talk around what they assume my position to be rather than do the kind of digging" that was necessary.<sup>129</sup>

Herskovits's dismissal of his critics as unscientific and emotional reflected his insensitivity about the stakes of this debate for black scholars. As Jonathan Holloway has observed, "even a Jewish intellectual like Herskovits, living in an age of fascism abroad and anti-Semitism at home," was unable to understand "the particular exigencies of the black experience in the United States. . . . Frazier's concerns were rooted in the fact that as a black intellectual he was open to certain material risks — lynch mobs, for instance — that would have been alien to Herskovits."<sup>130</sup>

Although he never wavered in his conviction that his views on black culture were correct, Herskovits was hurt by the severe reactions of the black intellectuals whom he considered to be his friends. Recently, Herskovits's daughter, Jean, recalled how *The Myth of the Negro Past* "infuriated the black intelligentsia." Herskovits lost friendships over the question of black culture. His relationships with Frazier and Bunche suffered, and their interaction diminished significantly, an outcome that was "very painful" to Herskovits.<sup>131</sup>

The ambivalence of black American intellectuals about their African heritage was replicated in the reaction to Herskovits's book by West African intellectuals. In July 1944 Meyer Fortes, director of the Institute of West African Art, Industries, and Social Sciences in Nigeria, wrote

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Herskovits, "It [*The Myth of the Negro Past*] caused quite a stir among the Lagos intellectuals to some of whom I showed it. They are caught up in a typical ambivalence of feelings about African culture. On the one hand their principal urge is to get away from their tribal past. On the other they go to extremes in claiming as ancient a cultural heritage as the white man has."<sup>132</sup> Herskovits replied that the West African intellectuals' reactions were "matched absolutely" by those of "Negro intellectuals in this country, though not by the Negroes in general."<sup>133</sup> Lending credence to Herskovits's statement was poet and journalist Frank Marshall Davis's review published in the *Chicago Bee*, a black newspaper, perhaps representing the black masses, which lauded *The Myth of the Negro Past* for showing that, contrary to the received view, black Americans had an impressive past in Africa.<sup>134</sup>

The debate on the nature of black culture continued through the post-World War II era. Herskovits's thesis of an African-influenced black culture remained as provocative throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s as it was in 1941. With the emergence of the integrationist-oriented civil rights movement, most liberal black and white intellectuals continued to question the usefulness of emphasizing African survivals in the culture of black Americans. They believed that stressing the differences between black culture and white culture would provide justification for continued racial segregation based on the idea that blacks, due to their different culture, could not assimilate into the mainstream culture of white Americans.

Frazier continued to lead the anti-Herskovits forces. Although he argued in December 1942 that "Negro institutions" were not "simply accommodations to slavery and caste conditions," he did not embrace the creative aspects of black culture. Instead, he intoned that "much of Negro behavior can be explained through his isolation which is responsible for the incomplete assimilation of the white man's culture."<sup>135</sup> In 1949, in *The Negro in the United States*, Frazier argued that although the enslavement of Africans "as well as the ordeal of the journey to the West Indies — the 'middle passage' — did not destroy completely their African heritage . . . in the New World, particularly in what became the United States, . . . new conditions of life destroyed the significance of their African heritage and caused new habits and attitudes to develop to meet new situations. Despite fresh importations from Africa, the process of sloughing off African culture continued. Since Emancipation this pro-

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cess has been so thoroughgoing that at the present time only in certain isolated areas can one discover what might be justly called African cultural survivals.”<sup>136</sup>

During the NAACP’s legal battle against segregated public schools, the Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDEF) purposely omitted the argument that black American culture had unique aspects related to the African heritage. As anthropologist Lee Baker has observed, the LDEF did not want to emphasize cultural difference; it sought to undercut any rationale for separating blacks and whites. Consequently, it thoroughly embraced the Myrdal position and only employed anthropologists to disprove the notion that blacks were genetically inferior to whites. Thus Herskovits’s position on black culture was excluded from the legal briefs.<sup>137</sup>

During the postwar era the position of Myrdal and Frazier that black culture was a pathological version of white culture “assumed the status of orthodoxy.”<sup>138</sup> As late as 1962 the president of the American Sociological Association, Everett Hughes, representing the dominant view among white sociologists, declared that “the Negro Americans want to disappear as a defined group; they want to become invisible as a group, while each of them becomes fully visible as a human being.”<sup>139</sup> Similarly, in 1965, two years after Herskovits had died, virtually nobody challenged the conclusions of Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Nathan Glazer in *Beyond the Melting Pot*, that “while other ethnic groups had historical and cultural backgrounds to help define them, African-Americans were without such historical and cultural context. ‘The Negro is only an American and nothing else,’ they concluded. ‘He has no history and culture to guard and protect.’”<sup>140</sup>

While Herskovits concentrated on the formation and administration of the African studies program at Northwestern during the postwar era, he continued to develop and publicize his interpretation of black culture and the African influence. In 1958 Herskovits published a second edition of *The Myth of the Negro Past*. In the preface he discussed key developments in the debate on black culture that had occurred since the publication of the first edition. Important research had been carried out throughout the Americas on the culture of various African American peoples. In addition, a number of valuable studies of West African cultures had been completed. As a result, a more precise understanding of the influence of African cultures in the Americas was now possible. Although several studies of black communities in the United States had

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been completed in recent years, Herskovits pointed out that these studies did not make the connection between African and American culture because they failed to use “ethnohistory as a methodological tool, and to make use of relevant comparative data.”<sup>141</sup> Due to his focus on African studies during the postwar era, Herskovits, who had not conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the United States before the war, did little to remedy this omission. He did, however, along with his colleague Alan Merriam, help direct a doctoral dissertation on black culture by an African American, George Robinson Ricks. Based on extensive research in nine southern cities and intensive fieldwork in Chicago, Ricks’s “Some Aspects of the Religious Music of the United States Negro: An Ethnomusicological Study with Special Emphasis on the Gospel Tradition” was perhaps the first dissertation on black gospel music. It is also worth noting that Herskovits suggested the topic to Ricks.<sup>142</sup>

The lack of research on black culture in the United States diminished any chance that the divergent views of Frazier and Herskovits would be reconciled during the 1940s and 1950s. John Szwed has observed that most anthropologists accepted the view that black culture was nonexistent and avoided research on the subject. They found it “an unpleasant experience to enter into a field of inquiry in which laymen had preceded them and had given racist interpretations” to the cultural differences between whites and blacks. Anthropologists accepted the notion of a melting pot society and refrained from undertaking research “on other ethnic groups that might challenge [their assumptions], . . . except where the ‘culturally different’ groups could be shown to have behaviors clearly positive in white middle-class terms. Consequently, we have dozens of articles in anthropological journals on Japanese-Americans, whose enterprise, thrift, and cleanliness are stressed.”<sup>143</sup>

Meanwhile, during the 1950s many anthropologists de-emphasized cultural pluralism and focused on cultures as components in a developing global cultural system. These neo-evolutionist anthropologists emphasized the material and structural parts of this global system and dismissed religion and folklore, which Herskovits emphasized, as insignificant.<sup>144</sup>

In 1959 Herskovits observed that social scientists, and particularly anthropologists who studied African Americans, were a priori denying any significant African influence on New World Negro cultures. Instead of marshalling evidence to repudiate Herskovits’s view, they would raise questions about certain details and then reject the whole interpretation

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as untenable. Moreover, some anthropologists created a “quite unreasonable burden of proof on those who would study the functioning of an African component in New World Negro cultures.” Anthropologist M. G. Smith, for example, argued that “traits regarded as evidence of the persistence of African cultural forms must be formally peculiar and distinct from the customs or institutions of all other cultural groups within the society of their location.”<sup>145</sup> This requirement, however, was not made for European influences.

Social scientists had created a special interpretive framework for analyzing black culture, in a sense segregating the study of black culture from the study of other cultures.<sup>146</sup> Social scientists discarded “their most sacred dogmas — value-free methods and the necessity for firsthand empirical evidence.” Then they “proceeded to pronounce on black people in a thoroughly nonrelativistic manner.”<sup>147</sup>

Liberal social scientists denied differences between black and white culture or explained that the differences were due to pathologies present in black culture because they believed that their analysis served the cause of social justice. Some believed that by departing from standard practice to avoid depicting black culture as different from white culture, they mitigated the chance that the differences would be seized on by racists to justify segregation. Other social scientists clung to the pathology analysis of black culture to promote government programs that would alleviate the problems in black communities.<sup>148</sup>

Daryl Scott has argued in support of the latter view. He maintained that during the late 1940s and 1950s liberal social scientists — notably E. Franklin Frazier, Abram Kardiner, Lionel Ovesey, and Arnold Rose — emphasized black pathology and black self-hate as a natural result of white oppression. In *Mark of Oppression*, Kardiner and Ovesey maintained that blacks idealized “unobtainable white standards,” leading blacks to frustration and the hatred of themselves and their group. These social scientists argued that the root cause of black self-hate was racial discrimination by whites. Similarly, Rose observed, “When one is abused or insulted and forces oneself to react passively, the hatred that would normally be directed toward the abusing person is instead turned inward.”<sup>149</sup>

In any event, social scientists disseminated a distorted view of black culture. According to this position, blacks were not creators of culture. Victimized by white oppression, they adopted a pathological version

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of white culture. In promulgating this view, social scientists “allowed shabby research on Afro-Americans in the United States to persist.”<sup>150</sup> In his 1944 review of the Myrdal study, unpublished until 1964, the black writer Ralph Ellison brilliantly illuminated the fallacy in this reasoning: “But can a people . . . live and develop for over three hundred years simply by *reacting*?” Ellison answered his own question in the negative, asserting that all cultures had creative aspects that could not be explained as mere reactions to another culture. Furthermore, he suggested that blacks had rejected aspects of white culture because they were perhaps pathological themselves. In this connection, Ellison wrote, if “lynching and Hollywood, fadism and radio advertising are products of the ‘higher’ culture, . . . the Negro might ask, ‘Why, if my culture is pathological, must I exchange it for these?’”<sup>151</sup>

This debate on black culture was not merely academic. By spreading a view of black culture as deviant, social scientists exacerbated the racial divide in America during the postwar era. In championing the notion of a pathological black culture and rejecting the notion of a creative black culture, social scientists had done what they had wanted to avoid: increase the divisions between blacks and whites.<sup>152</sup> The Herskovits view of black culture constituted a corrective to the dominant social science perspective. By emphasizing that African Americans, like all Americans, retained parts of their cultural heritage, Herskovits sought to demonstrate the universals and the particulars of the African American experience. In doing so, Herskovits hoped to build a bridge between whites and blacks based on the universality of their respective cultural experiences.



## Objectivity and the Development of Negro Studies

Objectivity is not neutrality, but alienation from self and society. . . . Objectivity is the way one comes to terms and makes peace with a world one does not like but will not oppose. — Alvin Gouldner

Everywhere the learned world is split into “schools” and rare indeed is the savant who does not appear to be at war with himself in his own bosom. — Charles Beard

**A**FTER WORLD WAR I the academy was transformed when many social scientists embraced a detachment from public policy, a development that had a profound influence on Herskovits, who was just beginning his professional career. Before the war, Progressive Era intellectuals had employed science as a way of achieving progress and curing society's ills. Liberal social scientists pursued research designed to shape public policy in favor of reform, while racist social scientists promoted government policies such as immigration restriction of southern and eastern Europeans. Acting as advocates for education, settlement houses, and political reform, Progressive intellectuals sought to create a more democratic society. The fluidity between social science and reform was demonstrated by the fact that the American Social Science Association (ASSA), formed after the Civil War, included both social reformers and social scientists.<sup>1</sup>

Several complementary developments led many Progressive social scientists to disavow their faith in social reform by the 1920s. During the first two decades of the twentieth century conservative college presidents fired numerous social scientists for advocating political and social reform. In order to safeguard their positions, academics backed away from



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advocacy and embraced quantitative research.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, social scientists became disillusioned with what they perceived as the futility of Progressive attempts at reform. Political reforms such as the presidential primaries failed in their democratizing mission, with the public being manipulated by electioneering and public relations specialists. Similarly, moral advocacy for social reform had led not to democracy but to the co-opting of religion by fundamentalism.<sup>3</sup>

The First World War reinforced social scientists' move away from advocacy, as they exchanged "moral fervor for reform" for "a reverence for scientific knowledge and technological innovation."<sup>4</sup> Psychologists administered intelligence tests to army recruits, economists helped with resource mobilization, and historians, economists, and ethnologists provided expert knowledge in preparation for the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>5</sup>

Disillusioned with moral advocacy and reform, many intellectuals placed their hopes in pure science.<sup>6</sup> Progressive reformers and uplifters gave way to detached professionals. A "language of 'efficiency' and 'social control' gradually eclipsed the humanitarian, moralistic rhetoric of earlier reformers."<sup>7</sup> In this way, social scientists sought to increase their authority by reestablishing their scientific credentials as professionals and by distinguishing themselves from political advocates.<sup>8</sup> Thus, as Barry Karl has observed, "the new idealists of the twenties chose not to call themselves 'progressives' and certainly not 'reformers.' They had moved out of the turbulent world of politics into the ordered world of science."<sup>9</sup>

Objectivist social scientists sought to establish themselves as a knowledge-elite by privileging their knowledge over that of nonprofessional social scientists who did not have the proper credentials or compromised their objectivity by pursuing social reform. As Donald Fisher has observed, however, "neither science nor social science is separate or distinctive in and of itself." Nonetheless, social scientists acted on the belief that their knowledge was distinctive. They sought to convince others by claiming that they were objective scientists uninterested in the practical implications of their work.<sup>10</sup>

A minority of social scientists rejected the notion that social science should or could be a value-free endeavor. They insisted that academics admit that their beliefs influenced their research. "I don't say that you ought to write history on the basis of your assumptions — but I say you do," maintained political scientist and historian Charles Beard. Others

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wholeheartedly embraced research designed to achieve social reform. Sociologist Robert Lynd argued that knowledge must have a social purpose. He maintained that social scientists put too much emphasis on quantification and should concern themselves instead with both normative goals and facts.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the 1920s and 1930s witnessed a “crystallization of opposing perspectives,” with social scientists dividing themselves into two contentious factions, which Mark C. Smith has labeled purposivists and service intellectuals. Although both groups embraced the scientific method, purposivists believed that social scientists should have definite social policy goals for their research. By contrast, service intellectuals advocated an “amoral science of technique” in which social scientists unearthed facts and tabulated data without regard to the use of such information.<sup>12</sup> Professional associations such as the American Economic Association and the American Political Science Association became battlegrounds between purposivists and service intellectuals.<sup>13</sup>

Many social scientists, including Herskovits, evidenced the tensions between the two positions in their own ideas and actions, contradicting their stated position at one time or another. While he strongly asserted his detachment from social purposes in his research, Herskovits also maintained strongly held values that influenced his writings. The ascendance of the scientism of interwar objectivists did not diminish the variety of ways in which scholars sought to define their objectivism. When social scientists diverged from their allegiance to a strict tabulating of “facts,” they still wanted to maintain their status and authority as objective scholars.<sup>14</sup> As Mark C. Smith has observed, “The debate over the proper role of the social scientist involved the conflict of two of America’s most widely cherished values: the utility of the scientific method and the normative goals of social thought.”<sup>15</sup> As some scholars moved away from activism, others continued to embrace it. At the same time, many social scientists did not resolve the issue for themselves, leading to contradictory actions.<sup>16</sup>

While he championed the view that an objective scholar must eschew social activism in one’s scholarship, Herskovits’s own work was designed to correct previous scholarship that upheld racial and cultural hierarchy. He employed the principle of objectivity to reinforce the authority of his scholarship as he attacked racist social science. In *Myth of the Negro Past*, he overtly sought to improve blacks’ self-image and reduce white preju-

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dice by disseminating information demonstrating the dynamism and strength of African and African American cultures. Meanwhile, he attacked other scholars, notably W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, for doing the same thing, mixing scholarship with advocacy. Herskovits's actions and statements reveal the strong egalitarian values and beliefs that undergirded his research, his attacks on racist scholarship and racism in society, and his support for tolerance of all cultures. Concurrently, however, Herskovits championed the benefits of pursuing detached scholarship without regard to social reform goals. In doing so, he failed to admit that his own egalitarian values and assumptions influenced his research.

Herskovits's assumptions also demonstrated the tension between universalism and particularism in his professional life. By exalting the idea of objectivity, he embraced scientific scholarship as a universal truth. To uphold the principle of objectivity, Herskovits opposed activist scholarship. On occasion, he even opposed activism that was in service to egalitarian goals. In this connection, he undercut efforts by black scholars to diminish their isolation from mainstream academe. By opposing activist scholarship, Herskovits sometimes reinforced the status quo.

In his fieldwork, however, Herskovits upheld a particularistic perspective. His egalitarianism led him to reject the notion of cultural or racial hierarchies. He also rejected the notion of universal values because values differed across cultures. Instead, he asserted that people defined their own reality and culture and created their own values that could not be objectively evaluated by outsiders. Thus Herskovits sought to understand African and African American cultures on their own terms.

From the 1920s to the 1940s Herskovits played a prominent role in the development of the study of people of African descent in the United States. In his fieldwork on African and African American peoples, Herskovits embraced a modern view of Negro studies that focused on blacks as active agents who made their own history and culture. As early as 1926 Herskovits defined Negro studies as the study of people of African descent in Africa and the Americas, presaging the current field of African diaspora studies.<sup>17</sup> Reflecting this perspective, the following year he was one of the "chief speakers" at the Fourth Pan-African Congress held in New York City and attended by 208 delegates from twenty-two states and ten foreign nations.<sup>18</sup> Historian Sterling Stuckey later credited Herskovits's scholarship, along with that of Paul Robeson, Du Bois, and Wood-

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son, with “providing an effective and I think obvious theoretical underpinning for theories of Pan-Africanism.”<sup>19</sup> By promoting Negro studies based on antiracist and egalitarian principles and by rejecting racial or cultural hierarchies in his portrayal of people of African descent, Herskovits corrected earlier scholarship that omitted blacks from study, objectified them, or debased them. He believed that it was absolutely essential that research be conducted in an objective and unbiased manner. Rational scientific research would undermine irrational racist beliefs. Science would lead to a more just society. By pursuing scientific research, Herskovits believed that he could provide the knowledge that would permit people to act more rationally. “Herskovits always saw himself as a professional anthropologist using the New World as a laboratory for testing hypotheses about culture . . . not as a stimulus to political activity,” observed sociologist St. Clair Drake. But Herskovits’s research had a social purpose, too. “He hoped . . . that one result of his scientific work would be to replace error with truth and thus to increase respect for Africans and people of African descent,” recalled Drake.<sup>20</sup>

As a Jewish scholar in an academic environment dominated by white Protestants—many of whom were anti-Semitic—Herskovits tried to deflect their tendency to devalue the scholarship on race produced by Jews, who were assumed to have a “subjective, minority, agenda.” Thus Herskovits emphasized his professional legitimacy by wrapping himself in the mantle of science. By doing so, he hoped to mitigate the “general distrust in intellectual discourse for ‘special interests’ . . . [which] served to delegitimize Jewish authorities in the fight against racism.”<sup>21</sup> Like other Jewish scholars, Herskovits faced anti-Jewish attitudes in his attempts to locate a teaching position after he earned his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1923. During the 1920s many universities limited Jewish hiring. In 1927 Yale, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago employed only one Jewish faculty member each, while Columbia had just two.<sup>22</sup> Herskovits did not gain a full-time teaching position until four years after he earned his Ph.D. When Northwestern University finally hired Herskovits in 1927, his college roommate wrote him, “It has worried me a long time that you didn’t get a college job; in fact made me rather bitter. It was rotten to see a good man being excluded because of nasty prejudice.”<sup>23</sup>

In this social climate, Herskovits underscored his scientific perspective to dispel potential critics. He insisted, “As a scientist it does not make a

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great deal of difference to me what happens with regard to the information I present, — that is, I cannot be responsible for what use is made of the information I give by the persons to whom I give it. That is quite outside my province. It is my undertaking as a scientist, to analyze the data that I find concerning any phase of civilization or particularly any phase of primitive civilization and to present these data as honestly as possible.”<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, in 1928 Herskovits resisted the NAACP’s request to write an appreciation of the association on the occasion of its twentieth-anniversary conference. He argued that his scholarly writings against scientific racism would be more effective if they came from a detached scholar: “In my work with the Negroes I have consistently avoided aligning myself with any group among them or any movement concerning them, although I have received invitations from numerous Negro organizations. . . . I feel that the more detached I am in my work, the more effective my results will be and the more they will be trusted by all persons concerned.”<sup>25</sup>

Only when Herbert J. Seligmann, NAACP publicity director, responded in the language of professional scholars did he convince Herskovits to write the appreciation. Seligmann told Herskovits that he did “not see how an expression of opinion or beliefs based on such facts as you know, made as a detached observer, can affect your standing or the reception of your work.” Seligmann added that only racists who rejected the NAACP and found “scientific opinion unnecessary because they ‘know the Nigger’” would question an endorsement.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike many sociologists and political scientists who embraced objectivism because they were disillusioned by the failures of Progressive Era advocacy, Herskovits — like other Boasian anthropologists — employed objectivity to discredit social scientists who supported the status quo in race relations or advocated reactionary policies designed to control non-whites or minority groups.<sup>27</sup> Thus despite his avowed support for objectivity and detached scholarship, Herskovits’s own strongly held egalitarian values influenced his work in physical and cultural anthropology. He believed that by shedding light on the diverse cultures of the world, anthropologists “documented the essential dignity of all human cultures.”<sup>28</sup>

In addition to challenging the scholarship of scientific racists, Herskovits also attacked the applied anthropology of European scholars who used anthropology to support imperialism. He cautioned against the use

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of anthropology by imperialist countries to deal with “the problems of administration and education confronting government officials, and others, who must deal with the primitive folk under their charge.”<sup>29</sup> He believed that acting in service to a government compromised the intellectual integrity of the scholar. At the same time, Herskovits asserted that anthropologists were powerless “in the face of the great social and economic forces that move toward the disintegration of the patterns of primitive life.”<sup>30</sup> He maintained that native cultures resisted the direction of European governments or anthropologists employed by those governments. Furthermore, if anthropologists planned their studies to satisfy the needs of imperialist officials, their studies would be flawed by the omission of important aspects of a culture that were of no interest to administrators.<sup>31</sup> Herskovits abhorred European scholars who worked for the state, particularly anthropologists like Bronislaw Malinowski, whom he believed acted in service to imperialist governments and not a search for truth. In 1936 Herskovits expressed his irritation at Malinowski’s “prescription for running the lives of the East Africans!”<sup>32</sup>

Somewhat inconsistently, Herskovits argued that American anthropologists who cooperated with the Bureau of Indian Affairs were doing the right thing because Franklin Roosevelt’s administration, unlike the imperialist governments of Europe, was “unequivocally on the side of the native [Indian].” Yet he cautioned that the government’s attitude toward American Indians might change, placing the anthropologists’ role in question.<sup>33</sup>

Herskovits also attacked anthropologists who conducted research that was intended to solve racial problems because he believed that these types of studies often resulted in shoddy work based on faulty assumptions of racial hierarchy. He maintained that research should be conducted without ulterior motives and proclaimed that, as a scientist, he was “concerned neither with race relations nor with what is ordinarily termed ‘the Negro problem.’”<sup>34</sup> Thus he criticized “the way in which both physical and cultural anthropology people tend to go off half-cocked under the pressure of social conditions.” Herskovits cited Harvard anthropologist Earnest Hooton’s study in which Hooton claimed that race was positively correlated with criminality.<sup>35</sup>

Herskovits’s objectivism and his rejection of advocacy extended beyond his distaste for imperialism and racism, leading him to reprove liberal scholars who focused on solving social problems in their research.

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For instance, he criticized anthropologist Ashley Montagu's attempts "to seek a solution for the American race problem," which Montagu believed could be found in education. Herskovits advised Montagu to "be content to remain the anthropologist and not aspire to follow the dim, treacherous path of what is coming to be termed the 'social engineer.'"<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, like other Boasian anthropologists, Herskovits employed knowledge gained through ethnographic research to act as a critic of American society and culture. During the 1920s intensive cultural fieldwork provided anthropologists with the opportunity to criticize American society based on a comparison with less technological societies. In *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), Margaret Mead compared American and Samoan child-rearing practices and criticized the sexual inhibitions common in the West. Similarly, Ruth Benedict's studies of Native American religions compared their religious practices with those of the West in a critique of Protestant fundamentalism in which she argued that morality should be separated from religion.<sup>37</sup>

Although Herskovits's social critique was not as explicit as that of Mead or Benedict, he unquestioningly approved of using the insights gained from anthropology to educate Americans as to proper values. He often preached the doctrine of cultural relativism, asserting that all cultures deserved respect and that to preserve the dignity of all cultures, the imposition of one culture on another must be avoided. He summed up his philosophy on the role of the citizen-scientist in this way: "As scientists the search for truth must come before all else. The debt we owe the society must be made in terms of long-time payment, in our fundamental contributions toward an understanding of the nature and processes of culture and, through this, to the solution of our own basic problems."<sup>38</sup> This philosophy accords with his argument in *The Myth of the Negro Past*, in which Herskovits maintained that his work would have the practical effect of bettering race relations by improving the self-image of blacks and changing whites' views about blacks to be more positive.

Based on his belief that anthropologists might contribute to the solution of social problems by advancing the understanding of culture, Herskovits spoke out against racism, imperialism, and injustice, though not in scholarly publications. As someone who desired the status and influence accorded the academic who undertook objective scholarship, Herskovits separated his activist tendencies from his scholarly pursuits. Although he eschewed activism in his scholarship, he took active political

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positions in other arenas. Following the completion of his study on the physical anthropology of Negroes, Herskovits used his authority on the subject to speak out against racism. In October 1929 Herskovits supported the publication of a pamphlet by the American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom called "Science Condemns Racism: A Reply to the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York."<sup>39</sup> In January 1934 Herskovits joined the Conference on Jewish Relations, which was formed "to dispel the various myths which people invent to justify race prejudice."<sup>40</sup> In December 1938 Herskovits, Alain Locke, and Paul Douglas were quoted in an article entitled "Experts Review Negro Prejudice." In his comments Herskovits sought to disprove stereotypes of blacks by emphasizing their resistance to slavery and the strength of African civilizations.<sup>41</sup> In 1947 Herskovits joined with faculty members in petitioning Northwestern's president to end the longtime exclusion of black students from the school's dormitories. Herskovits and his colleagues asserted that the recently completed Second World War was "fought for principles that present policies of Northwestern deny."<sup>42</sup>

Throughout his life Herskovits held membership in numerous liberal organizations. As a young man expressing a more radical political view, he briefly joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1920. A longtime member of the American Civil Liberties Union, Herskovits also joined the Evanston Council for Democratic Action, the Illinois Chapter of the Progressive Citizens of America, and the Northwestern University Teacher's Union.<sup>43</sup> On a personal level, however, he sometimes acquiesced to segregation. In May 1943 Herskovits asked friends on the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) to submit his "name for a non-resident membership in the [Cosmos] Club," a segregated club in Washington DC.<sup>44</sup>

Herskovits's failure to gain foundation financing for his 1926 plan to undertake research into the African cultural and biological background of blacks in the Americas reflected the politics of knowledge production at that time. The young scholar's embrace of a strictly detached scholarship focusing on blacks as subjects and as culture builders placed him at odds with the dominant views of the foundations.<sup>45</sup> During the 1920s most foundations were interested in funding studies that supported the status quo in politics and society.<sup>46</sup> Toward that end, they financed research that focused on solving social problems that threatened societal order. Thus



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the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) was interested in studies of racial differences and social problems, not in a study that uncovered the origins of New World Negro cultures and compared them. Although scientists and social scientists might claim that their research had nothing to do with politics, research projects are rarely unrelated to the prevailing social and political climate.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, the SSRC financed projects that focused on studying issues such as racial tensions, nativism, black northern migration, economic recession, crime increases, and labor conflict.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial — the primary benefactor of the SSRC — led by Beardsley Ruml, increasingly emphasized practical studies to increase social control.<sup>49</sup> The foundations were more interested in “a practical ‘social technology’” that could be applied to the “specific danger zones that threatened the foundation of society.” They were less interested in “fundamental theoretical development” and research.<sup>50</sup> Therefore the SSRC financed E. Franklin Frazier’s study of the black family and Charles S. Johnson’s extensive study of Negro problems in the United States.<sup>51</sup> Herskovits’s first project on the physical anthropology of American Negroes fit the criteria as a study that would illuminate the race issue and its impact on issues of immigration and social change. His assertion “that a greater understanding of contemporary Negro problems will follow a knowledge of the cultural base from which he has come” did not convince the foundations.<sup>52</sup> In the final analysis, Herskovits’s interest in the African cultural influence in the Americas proved to be too esoteric for the foundations.<sup>53</sup>

Despite great efforts by Herskovits and his supporters to win approval, several other factors contributed to his proposal’s failure to win foundation backing.<sup>54</sup> The interdisciplinary nature of Herskovits’s project — he would analyze the physical and cultural anthropology of peoples of African descent — undercut foundation support. The foundations and most social scientists, whose scholarly authority was based on their mastery of a specific subject, generally supported studies that were strictly embedded in one subject. They feared that a blurring of disciplinary boundaries would threaten their professional status. Although some scholars advocated an interdisciplinary approach — the SSRC was formed, in part, to promote such studies — few scholars did such work. The long-term tendency in academe was toward division into distinct disciplines, with social scientists pursuing intradisciplinary professional advancement rather than pursuing an interdisciplinary approach. Moreover, Hers-

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kovits's study was not only interdisciplinary, but it crossed the larger boundaries between the natural and social sciences. His focus on culture and biology placed his study in a no-man's-land between the SSRC and the NRC, which had agreed in 1925 to divide the social sciences and the natural sciences between them.<sup>55</sup>

To bridge these boundaries, Herskovits tried to be all things to all people. Due to the physical sciences orientation of the NRC, he stressed physical more than cultural anthropology in his NRC proposal.<sup>56</sup> By contrast, in his request to the SSRC, he stressed the culture question, hoping that due to the SSRC's emphasis on the social sciences, it would be more receptive to a study of cultural change. In fact, when Herskovits applied for funding from the NRC, Alfred V. Kidder, chair of the NRC Division of Anthropology and Psychology, advised him not to tell the SSRC of his application, as this would limit his chances of success with the SSRC.<sup>57</sup> Herskovits student Joseph Greenberg remembered Mortimer Graves of the ACLS telling him, "Herskovits, that terrible man, . . . he comes around to me and he tells me anthropology is a humanity and then he goes around to the SSRC and claims it is a social science and . . . for all I know he goes to the National Research Council [NRC] and says it is a physical science."<sup>58</sup> Herskovits's attempts to make his interdisciplinary project more palatable to the major funders proved futile.

Another problem with Herskovits's funding request was its poor timing; it was premature. The NRC was just organizing its Negro Committee, which like the Interracial Committee of the SSRC, would not authorize major funding grants until 1928.<sup>59</sup> Herskovits's \$12,000 project was probably beyond the scope of the NRC committee, which had a proposed budget of less than \$40,000 for three years, about 30 percent of the budget of the Committee on Scientific Problems of Human Migrations.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the foundations' resistance to his plans to study African American cultures, Herskovits stuck to his vision and arranged private funding so that he could move ahead with his plans, albeit in somewhat different form. During the 1920s funding for anthropological research came primarily from individual contributors and was often channeled through museums.<sup>61</sup> Fortunately for Herskovits, one of the major benefactors of young anthropologists was the wealthy folklorist Elsie Clews Parsons.<sup>62</sup> Parsons proceeded to provide the major funding for Herskovits's two Suriname trips and the Dahomey trip. Boas arranged for additional assistance from the Columbia University Social Science Research Council,

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with the Northwestern Social Science Research Council also providing some aid for the Suriname and Dahomey trips.<sup>63</sup> The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial and the Rockefeller Foundation provided most of the financing for a number of university Social Science Research Councils, including those at Columbia and Northwestern, as well as the national SSRC.<sup>64</sup>

During the mid to late 1930s Herskovits's increased success in gaining foundation support for his ethnographic research matched the general trend. By the close of the 1920s the NRC, the SSRC, and the ACLS began to finance cultural studies. This development was primarily the result of the increasing institutional influence of Boas and his supporters and their success at "redefining the 'racial' research of the NRC in social or cultural terms." As a result, funding was more likely to be arranged by "foundation directorates, committed to more general cultural or social welfare goals."<sup>65</sup> Herskovits financed his 1934 field trip to Haiti by contributing \$1,300 of his own money to the Columbia University Social Science Research Council and getting the Rockefeller Foundation to match his donation. Herskovits also received grants for recording and transcribing songs, taking movies, and writing *Life in a Haitian Valley* from the Northwestern University Social Science Research Council, the ACLS, the NRC, and the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>66</sup>

Herskovits's increased success at obtaining funding from the foundations during the 1930s was also attributable to his growing influence with the learned societies and foundations. This influence was directly related to his renown as an expert on African Americans.<sup>67</sup> As Herskovits's professional status and influence climbed, the SSRC called on him to serve in various capacities. In 1928 Herskovits served on the SSRC's Committee on Race Differences, which tracked and planned research on racial tests.<sup>68</sup> In 1929 he served as an adviser on two projects approved by the SSRC Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations.<sup>69</sup> By the mid-1930s Herskovits's influence with the foundations was enhanced by his close friendship with sociologist Donald Young, who was in charge of fellowships and grants-in-aid at the SSRC.<sup>70</sup> Joseph Greenberg, a graduate anthropology student during the 1930s, remembered Herskovits as "a powerful man" with the foundations. To Greenberg, "it was like magic" how Herskovits could get fellowships for himself and his students.<sup>71</sup>

Herskovits's increased status and influence led to greater ease in obtaining funding for his own research. The first Herskovits field trip to be

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fully funded by a foundation was the 1939 expedition to Trinidad, for which the Carnegie Corporation provided \$3,250.<sup>72</sup> The Northwestern University Graduate School gave additional financing for tabulating data from the field trip.<sup>73</sup>

With the onset of World War II, the foundations' foreign policy concerns gave Herskovits greater opportunities for funding his projects. In 1941 increasing concern within the Rockefeller Foundation over Nazi influence in Latin America led to a concerted effort to increase American influence there. Consequently, the Rockefeller Foundation made funding available to American researchers to go to Latin America to improve the possibilities for a long-term "intellectual rapprochement" with the United States. Toward that end, the Rockefeller Foundation supported a project designed to disseminate American social science methods, assess research possibilities in Latin America, and lay the groundwork for foundation support for training Latin American researchers.<sup>74</sup>

Aware of the Rockefeller Foundation's interest in Latin America, Herskovits submitted a proposal to the foundation outlining his recommendations for anthropological work in Brazil. He would provide field-work training to Brazilian students while proceeding with his own research interests in African-influenced cultures in Bahia and Recife.<sup>75</sup> Herskovits's proposal for a one-year research trip requiring \$10,000 was approved.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to conducting his own research, Herskovits helped move Negro studies into the mainstream of academia by establishing anthropology courses focused on African and African American cultures at Northwestern University.<sup>77</sup> During his first year at Northwestern, Herskovits offered courses on race and folklore that concentrated significant attention on blacks.<sup>78</sup> At the time, Herskovits was one of the few white scholars who taught courses emphasizing black people. In white-dominated academe, the social sciences and the humanities generally either disregarded or degraded African Americans. Mainstream social science and history journals ordinarily excluded articles by or about Africans or African Americans.<sup>79</sup> Although sociologists of race relations, led by the University of Chicago's Robert Park and his students, E. Franklin Frazier and Charles S. Johnson, did write about African Americans, their writings were based on the assumption of black cultural inferiority. These sociologists argued that "inferior" cultures would disappear and

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the people would assimilate into the dominant and superior culture of native-born white Protestants.<sup>80</sup>

While anthropologists, led by Franz Boas, attacked the prevailing views of pseudoscientific racism, they largely ignored African and African American cultures, except in folklore studies, until Herskovits came on to the scene. During the 1910s and 1920s the *Journal of American Folk-Lore* published a number of articles, most by Boas and his students, on African American folklore, including the first articles by black anthropologists such as Arthur Fauset and Zora Neale Hurston.<sup>81</sup> Herskovits later recalled how hard he had to push to get the American Anthropological Association to include studies “of Negro peoples who wear trousers instead of loin cloths. . . . They decided that pants was anthropology!”<sup>82</sup> Anthropologists had traditionally studied isolated nonliterate cultures. By convincing anthropologists to include acculturation studies as a central part of anthropology, Herskovits was able to establish the legitimacy of studying African American cultures, which were often literate and interacted with other cultures.

Herskovits's efforts at Northwestern joined him with the few black colleges and black scholars making efforts to study African Americans and to place blacks at the center of study. Black scholars sought to reverse the fact that African Americans were usually excluded as subjects of study. They also sought to address the failure of the social sciences and the humanities to study African Americans and Africans as anything but objects of domination and degradation. In history, Carter G. Woodson presided over the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) and published the *Journal of Negro History*. In sociology, Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University studied blacks in the context of race relations.<sup>83</sup> E. Franklin Frazier of Howard University became the leading expert on the black family.<sup>84</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois made signal contributions in both sociology and history. Black colleges, led by Howard University, initiated the effort to teach black studies courses, with the first black history courses appearing in the 1910s at several schools.<sup>85</sup>

In developing anthropology at Northwestern, Herskovits sought to emphasize Negro ethnology, West African linguistics, and West African archaeology. Known for his spellbinding lectures, he stressed student preparation for fieldwork by obtaining student fellowships, inviting visiting professors in African anthropology from Europe, and setting up a departmental library emphasizing Negro studies. Herskovits hoped

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to fill the gap in research on Negroes and advance the field of Negro anthropology.<sup>86</sup>

Depression-era budgetary constraints and a conservative university administration delayed the fulfillment of Herskovits's vision. During the 1930s Northwestern's administration sought "to promote Northwestern as a midwestern university of conservative character, with evident intent to gain new resources from Chicago citizens who are not favorable to the degree of experimentation seen at the University of Chicago."<sup>87</sup> In 1936 Herskovits told a professor who had just resigned, "the University being what it is, you know what a weight of tradition confronts a person who wishes to do something that isn't just what has been done before!"<sup>88</sup> Three years earlier Herskovits had complained to university president Walter D. Scott that he could not offer a doctorate in the anthropology program, despite the fact that the program in African anthropology was receiving increasing recognition from the anthropological community. At a time when he was the only anthropology professor at Northwestern, Herskovits pushed for more anthropology courses, more anthropology professors, and more money for research. Scott, however, vetoed Herskovits's requests for funding for research and additional professors.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, Herskovits made progress. In 1929 he had convinced the administration to rename the sociology department the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. And in 1938 a separate anthropology department was set up at Northwestern with Herskovits as chair.<sup>90</sup> The anthropology department, however, remained small for some time. During the early 1940s Herskovits and William Bascom were the only anthropology instructors at Northwestern, and when Bascom entered wartime service, Herskovits was the sole anthropology instructor in 1942-43.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the financial limitations, Herskovits began to create a subfield in Negro anthropology during the 1930s. In 1931 he introduced a new course called "The Negro in Africa and America," which dealt with the physical anthropology and culture of blacks in Africa and the Americas. The course emphasized culture change due to contact between Europeans and Africans.<sup>92</sup> Herskovits's methodological approach to Negro studies was based on the cultural connections between Africa and the Americas. An indication of Herskovits's unique approach and subject matter was that there was no appropriate text available for the course. He outlined the content of his course "The Negro in Africa and America" in a chapter he wrote for *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, published in

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1935.<sup>93</sup> By that time Herskovits was teaching a number of courses dealing with race and blacks, including an introductory anthropology course in which he “sketch[ed] in broad strokes a picture of the main problems of race, language, culture, and their interrelationships.” Herskovits also taught courses entitled “Races of Man,” “General Ethnology,” “Primitive Economics,” “Social Organization,” “Folklore,” and “Primitive Art.”<sup>94</sup>

Herskovits’s egalitarianism led him to support increased opportunities for blacks in anthropology and in the social sciences in general. He sought out black students in anthropology while at Columbia when he was working on his physical anthropology study. In that project Herskovits employed four assistants, all African Americans: Louis E. King, Abram L. Harris, Zora Neale Hurston, and Greene Maxwell.<sup>95</sup> While employed on the Herskovits study, King, Harris, and Hurston undertook graduate study at Columbia University with funding by the university.<sup>96</sup> Herskovits sought foundation funding and a scholarship from Columbia for Maxwell, apparently without success.<sup>97</sup> He also recommended foundation fellowships for black scholars at other universities, including E. Franklin Frazier and Lorenzo Turner.<sup>98</sup>

Throughout his career, Herskovits trained black students in anthropology. His record seems to contradict St. Clair Drake’s statement that Herskovits “avoided accepting black students for serious anthropological training.”<sup>99</sup> In 1929 Herskovits recommended Vivian Cameron, a master’s degree candidate in anthropology, for fellowships from the Rosenwald Fund and the General Education Board (GEB) to pursue her doctorate. Herskovits reminded the Rosenwald Fund of the financial difficulties facing many black students. He maintained that Cameron, whose thesis was a “study of magic medical formulae of the American Negro,” would provide “the Negro group [with] . . . an anthropologist who, in addition to a background in the South and sympathy for her problem, has the detachment and the intellectual qualities requisite to scientific evaluation of material.”<sup>100</sup> Cameron completed her master’s thesis, “Folk Beliefs Pertaining to Health of the Southern Negro,” in 1930.<sup>101</sup>

Herskovits’s first black graduate student to obtain the Ph.D. at Northwestern was Hugh H. Smythe. In December 1940 Herskovits strongly recommended Smythe, who had been a student at Northwestern for two years under a Rosenwald Fund fellowship, for a predoctoral fellowship from the SSRC. Herskovits characterized Smythe as “in the upper one per

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cent of all students I have known so far as zeal for investigation,” strong on details with “good critical ability.”<sup>102</sup> In 1941 Smythe proposed to do fieldwork on the Black Caribs (those with African and Carib Indian heritage, known today as the Garifuna) in Honduras. When Smythe was denied a special entry permit required by the Honduran government for black visitors, Herskovits interceded on Smythe’s behalf with a friend at the U.S. State Department. After the intercession of the State Department, Honduras agreed to issue the visa.<sup>103</sup> By this time, however, the United States’s entrance into World War II prevented Smythe from undertaking the fieldwork. In 1945 Smythe completed a library dissertation on the social organization of West African peoples.<sup>104</sup> Smythe later taught at Brooklyn College for over twenty years and served as American ambassador to Syria and Malta.<sup>105</sup>

Another of Herskovits’s black graduate students was Johnnetta B. Cole, who took her graduate work at Northwestern during the 1950s and 1960s. She decided to study with Herskovits based on the recommendation of George E. Simpson, her cultural anthropology professor at Oberlin College who had taken postdoctoral work with Herskovits at Northwestern in 1936. Cole received an M.A. and a Ph.D. in anthropology at Northwestern based on fieldwork conducted in Liberia. She later wrote of her teacher, “Herskovits had two special places in his heart: one for students who were African American, and another for students who were women.”<sup>106</sup>

Herskovits’s close attention to the work of his students was viewed by some as meddling paternalism, by others as welcome assistance. As one of Herskovits’s students has observed, “Herskovits was a strong man, well known in anthropology, who single-handedly ran the department. He was on every graduate student’s committee.” Herskovits closely watched and supervised his students’ fieldwork, having them mail him copies of field notes as often as once a week. “[H]e and his wife in many ways created the image of parents toward us as student-children,” remembered the same student.<sup>107</sup> Another student recalled how “under relentless pressure from Herskovits, which I appreciate in retrospect, I finished my dissertation.”<sup>108</sup> In this way Herskovits may have emulated Boas, known as Papa Franz by some of his female students, who also closely followed his students’ fieldwork and research.<sup>109</sup>

As a teacher of black studies based in an anthropological perspective, Herskovits trained his students to go to the field and disregard ethno-



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centric evaluations of their subjects' culture. As one student observed, they "went to the field to 'understand' another people."<sup>110</sup> Herskovits mentored a number of anthropologists, including William R. Bascom, Joseph H. Greenberg, Alan P. Merriam, Erika Bourguignon, and George E. Simpson, who helped shape the fields of African American and African anthropology through the middle of the twentieth century. In addition to his own anthropology students, Herskovits also influenced historians, political scientists, and at least one choreographer and dancer to focus on people of color as creators of culture. Toward that end, he supported research that documented and disseminated the creative aspects of black cultures. He gave "special field training" and promoted the career of Katherine Dunham, who would achieve great professional success as a dancer and choreographer.<sup>111</sup> In 1935 Herskovits helped arrange a fellowship and fieldwork for Dunham to travel to the West Indies the following winter as a Rosenwald Foundation fellow. With the fellowship, Dunham studied West Indian dance in Jamaica, Trinidad, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Haiti and incorporated dances from those areas into her own choreography and performances.<sup>112</sup>

Herskovits's musical talents sometimes permitted him to assist his students in nontraditional ways. Following Dunham's return from her 1936 field trip to the West Indies, Herskovits provided the percussion in Dunham's performance of Haitian dance. A Chicago newspaper recorded the event:

The professor dropped to his knees. He brought the heel of his palm down rhythmically upon the cowhide drumhead. With the drumstick grasped in his other hand he beat a tattoo on the blue and white cylindrical frame of the drum. The hunsì (priestess) began to dance.

"Damballa," she murmured.

At the word the professor changed his tempo. The dancer's shoulders twitched in slow rhythm, gradually accelerating with the drum. The selected audience drew in its breath.

This was the Haitian ceremonial dance to Damballa, voodoo snake-spirit.<sup>113</sup>

Herskovits helped Ralph Bunche get an SSRC fellowship to do post-doctoral work in anthropology at Northwestern in 1936–37.<sup>114</sup> After completing his dissertation on French colonial administration in West Africa, which focused primarily on the bureaucrats, Bunche sought to

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broaden his own training so he could better understand African cultures and institutions. With Herskovits's help, Bunche undertook field research in 1936–37 in southern and eastern Africa, where he reversed his dissertation focus and got “the native point of view.”<sup>115</sup>

In the decade following the Second World War, when few northern white universities employed black professors, Herskovits promoted the hiring of black faculty members at Northwestern. In 1947 he pressed Northwestern's president to hire African Americans by advising him that other historically white colleges were increasingly doing so.<sup>116</sup> When the dean of the school of education at Northwestern was “looking for a man in the field of science education,” Herskovits persuaded him to consider hiring an African American and contacted Howard University historian Rayford Logan for suggestions of candidates for the position. After checking with the dean of the graduate school and a physics professor at Howard, Logan advised Herskovits that they did not know any African Americans who could “meet the qualifications” for the position.<sup>117</sup>

Herskovits also influenced historians to focus on blacks as active agents of historical change and challenge the prevailing view that during slavery, blacks were docile accommodationists to the institution. Herskovits's research on Suriname and Haiti revealed that Africans resisted slavery in numerous ways. In Suriname African slaves escaped slavery and established Maroon societies along the Suriname River during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>118</sup> In Haiti slaves escaped and established Maroon societies in the highlands. They also rose up in revolt many times from the sixteenth century to the successful uprising of the late eighteenth century that ended slavery and established Haitian independence.<sup>119</sup> Unlike other white scholars who knew of these events but failed to see their relevance for American history, Herskovits proposed that if slaves resisted their condition in the West Indies and South America, they also might have done so in North America.

Herskovits encouraged students and colleagues to analyze slavery in the United States from the slave's perspective. In his classes at Northwestern, he emphasized the strength of African cultures and the “numerous revolts which occurred wherever slavery obtained.” He urged his students to research black resistance to slavery in the antebellum South. He also focused on African and New World Negro folktales and the use of indirection by slaves as a way of covertly criticizing authority.<sup>120</sup> Herskovits questioned the dominant view by historians of the docile Negro

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slave, suggesting that “his docility . . . was . . . a mask for a deeper-lying restlessness.”<sup>121</sup> Harvey Wish (1909–68), a social historian, wrote articles on slave revolts for the *Journal of Negro History* in Herskovits’s seminar on Negroes. Wish’s essays, contravening the widely held view of the slaves’ happy compliance to the institution, emphasized an ongoing courageous struggle for liberty.<sup>122</sup> In addition to Wish’s work, the anthropologists Raymond Bauer and Alice Bauer wrote an important essay, “Day to Day Resistance to Slavery,” which emphasized “everyday forms of protest, especially malingering,” in Herskovits’s seminar.<sup>123</sup> In 1942 Herskovits passed along a paper by Felice Swados, medicine editor of *Time* magazine, on the “living conditions of Negroes during slavery” to the Bauers, for use in their essay.<sup>124</sup> Both the Bauers and Wish found their interpretations of slave resistance supported by Herskovits.

Herskovits also advocated for Herbert Aptheker, who did groundbreaking research on slave revolts. In November 1944 Herskovits recommended Aptheker for a Guggenheim fellowship to study “The American Negro in the Second World War.” In his recommendation, Herskovits stated that Aptheker “was one of the first to understand the importance of re-analysing historical materials so as to give us a comprehensive understanding of the force of Negro discontent in ante bellum time, and his book, ‘American Negro Slave Revolts’ is a first class contribution to the field.” Aptheker received the fellowship, which he used to complete *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*.<sup>125</sup> During the 1930s and early 1940s the published work on slave revolts of Joseph C. Carroll, “the second black to receive a doctorate from Ohio State University’s history department,” Wish, and Aptheker challenged the then conventional wisdom that slaves did not resist their bondage in any significant way.<sup>126</sup>

Herskovits’s influence through the work of the Bauers, Aptheker, and Wish helped inform John Hope Franklin’s interpretation of slavery in his landmark history of African Americans, *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947). Franklin’s emphasis on slave resistance and family strength in the face of horrific brutality was based in large part on the scholarship of the above-mentioned scholars.<sup>127</sup>

In addition to supporting research, Herskovits encouraged the foundations and the learned societies to appoint black scholars to committees that made funding recommendations. In 1928 he recommended that the SSRC’s Committee on Race Differences add at least one black member,

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maintaining “that the appointment of a committee on Race without at least one Negro is unwise.” After Herskovits suggested biologist Ernest E. Just or the psychologist and assistant superintendent of Washington DC schools H. H. Long, Just was added to the committee that included a white chair, Joseph Peterson, and three other white members.<sup>128</sup>

Herskovits’s use of his growing authority with the foundations to advance the study of people of color, however, was mitigated by his paternalism toward black scholars. At times, Herskovits’s relations with black scholars were marked by tension. Although he wanted to include blacks in academia, he was usually unwilling to relinquish his dominant position or support an activist agenda that would confront societal restrictions on black scholars. Herskovits’s actions led some black scholars to characterize him as a paternalist. Charles P. Henry has observed, “As a White expert on race relations, Herskovits was one of the ‘objective’ scholars private foundations relied on to endorse African American scholars conducting research on Blacks elsewhere in the world.”<sup>129</sup> Ralph Bunche was one who sometimes saw a paternalist bent in Herskovits. When Bunche was doing postdoctoral work in anthropology under Herskovits at Northwestern in 1937, the two men became friends, often socializing together. Bunche recorded in his diary that after he gave a talk, “The Mandate Togoland,” “Mel and Frances [Herskovits] drooled all over me — Frances stating that she and Mel would have to make me a ‘big man’ when I returned — e.g., pres. of H[oward]. U[niversity].”<sup>130</sup>

In addition to his paternalism, Herskovits’s strict adherence to his own notion of objectivist, detached scholarship and his desire to direct the field of Negro studies brought him into conflict with the leading black scholar-activists of the time, Carter Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois. Herskovits accused Woodson and Du Bois of engaging in polemics and falling short of scholarly standards of objectivity. Yet as John Hope Franklin has commented, black scholars were “obligated constantly to challenge the notion of black inferiority.”<sup>131</sup> Neither Du Bois nor Woodson shrank from challenging black inferiority as scholars and as activists. But as blacks challenging black inferiority, they were often labeled propagandists whose objectivity was in question.

Thus black scholars like Du Bois and Woodson, who disputed the accepted race relations formula of knowledge-elites, were marginalized. As John Stanfield has argued, “the prestige stratification of their [black scholars] contributions is relative to how much their ideas and even per-

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sonalities are accommodative to the historically specific racial caste relations within and external to their disciplines. We find this to be the case in how pre-World War II philanthropic foundation administrators, white academic mentors, and elites in professional social sciences tended to select or ignore black social scientists and evaluate their work.<sup>132</sup> When Du Bois and Woodson strenuously attacked the Rockefeller Foundation's support for industrial education and white-dominated knowledge production, they were marginalized as propagandists who lacked true objectivity. Moreover, white knowledge-elites questioned Du Bois's scholarship because of his political activism as editor of the NAACP's journal, the *Crisis*.

The different intellectual perspectives of Woodson and Herskovits led to great tension in their professional relationship. As John Hope Franklin has observed, black scholars constantly faced the question of "how to stay calm and objective in the face of forces barring them from membership in the mainstream of American scholarship and how to resist 'the temptation to pollute . . . scholarship with polemics.'" <sup>133</sup> Herskovits believed that he had resolved the dilemma of scholarship and polemics by carefully separating his scholarly research from his popular lectures and writing. But as a white scholar, Herskovits did not suffer the limitations placed on black scholars, who were regularly denied access to southern archives and excluded from teaching positions at white colleges. Woodson, however, as the leader of a movement to popularize black history and rectify the sins of omission and commission by white scholars and institutions, sometimes combined his own scholarship with polemics. Gunnar Myrdal maintained that in Woodson's *Journal of Negro History* and the ASNLH, "[p]ropagandistic activities go on side by side with the scholarly ones." Myrdal understood the temptation to do so "in view of the greater distortion and falsification of the facts in the writings of white historians." Nevertheless, Myrdal argued that Woodson's methods led to "a definite distortion in the emphasis and the perspective given the facts."<sup>134</sup> In addition, as Jacqueline Goggin has observed, "[b]y covering such a broad range of the black experience, Woodson, and his readers, paid a price, for he often was forced to overgeneralize, blurring distinctions of place, time, and class." Similarly, Earlie Thorpe criticized Woodson "for failing to document the assertions in many of his books."<sup>135</sup>

The question of who would undertake and control black studies also contributed to the tension between Woodson and Herskovits. Both men

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believed that there should be no color line when it came to black studies. But Woodson, although he regularly included the writings of white scholars in the *Journal of Negro History* and invited white scholars to participate in the annual meetings of the ASNHL, believed that black scholars best did research on black life. He maintained that “if the story of the Negro is ever told it must be done by scientifically trained Negroes.” Moreover, in “pursuing the real history and the status of the Negro . . . men of other races cannot function efficiently because they do not think black.”<sup>136</sup>

Woodson fought those who he believed were trying to undermine black autonomy in politics and scholarship. He attacked Thomas Jesse Jones, the white education director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a philanthropy concerned with black education, after Jones wrote in 1917 an influential report that convinced many foundations to support black schools that emphasized vocational education and to withdraw from schools that stressed liberal arts education. Following Woodson’s criticism of the report, Jones convinced many foundations, including the Rosenwald Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the GEB, to terminate foundation support for Woodson’s association.<sup>137</sup> Woodson viewed Jones’s actions as evidence of whites’ desire to control decisions about black education. Woodson also refused to surrender autonomy over the *Journal of Negro History*. He rejected the white philanthropies’ recommendation that he affiliate with a black college, leading to the termination of any substantial foundation support after 1933. In politics, Woodson reproved blacks who supported either major political party, based on his belief that both were “degenerate parties” determined to subordinate blacks. Furthermore, Woodson attacked blacks who joined interracial organizations, calling them “Uncle Toms” and arguing that since they “refused to oppose whites, they were defenders of segregation.”<sup>138</sup>

Meanwhile, Herskovits, although sometimes expressing displeasure with the racism of white institutions in America, did not question the enhanced influence he received as a result of his whiteness or the fact that he was generally perceived as an unbiased observer. By contrast, the historical profession marginalized Woodson, perceived by mainstream scholars as biased due to his championing of black history.

Almost from the outset of Herskovits’s professional career, his differences with Woodson emerged. Herskovits considered Woodson a

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propagandist, whose scholarship was often incomplete, amateurish, and suffused with polemics. Woodson thought Herskovits was another white paternalist intent on controlling black studies. The tensions between Herskovits and Woodson dated from the negotiations during the mid-1920s to find a black anthropology student to assist Herskovits on his anthropometry studies and to be trained in the discipline. In the search for black research assistants, Herskovits and Boas sought Woodson's help, though ultimately Woodson provided no assistance in this endeavor. Herskovits believed that the reason that Woodson stonewalled on providing a researcher was that Woodson "thinks to this day my motive was to get what he terms a 'flunky.'"<sup>139</sup> The exchange between Woodson and Herskovits about a black research assistant marked the beginning of a very turbulent relationship between the two scholars.

Herskovits's intellectual differences with Woodson first became evident when Woodson attacked Herskovits's biometric approach in his study of the physical anthropology of African Americans. Each distrusted the other. Herskovits, after being invited to speak at the 1929 ASNLH meeting, wrote Boas characterizing Woodson "as my old and dear, but none too trusted friend" and complained that "it is always a throw-up whether anything arranged by Woodson for me falls through or not."<sup>140</sup> As if fulfilling Herskovits's fears, Woodson later wrote Herskovits, "I regret your topic does not harmonize with the leading thought of the session at which it is possible for you to speak."<sup>141</sup>

A notable dispute between the two scholars arose after the 1936 publication of Woodson's *The African Background Outlined or Handbook for the Study of the Negro*.<sup>142</sup> Woodson wrote *The African Background Outlined* to provide teachers and the general population a source for information about Africa.<sup>143</sup> Woodson's book included two parts: the first, a history of Africa up to the colonial period; the second, a selected group of topics on African American history with extensive annotated bibliographies.<sup>144</sup>

Herskovits's response to Woodson's work suggests that the differences between the two men were personal as well as intellectual. Upon hearing about the book, Herskovits told his friend Donald Young, "I think it is time somebody ought to take a crack at the imposing stucco facade of this gent, and I am willing to do it." He asked Young to get him a copy of the book, which he would "review with a sledge hammer."<sup>145</sup> Herskovits then proceeded to do just that, characterizing Woodson's work as "special pleading" filled with "undocumented accusations," bibliographies

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that “show a strong anti-white prejudice,” and an “essential lack of objectivity.” Although Herskovits “fully sympathize[d] with Dr. Woodson’s irritation at the treatment of the Negro by those who have misappropriated the term ‘scholar;’” this did not “excuse careless scholarship, indulgence in ‘loaded’ adjectives, and unwillingness to give credit where credit is due.”<sup>146</sup> For example, Herskovits criticized Woodson’s discussion of the conversion of African slaves to Christianity. He found Woodson’s assertion that “the Christianization of the Negro was an easy task, a much easier one for the Negro than for the European pagans, because Christianity is an Oriental cult and the Negro has an Oriental mind,” to be spurious.<sup>147</sup>

Although some of Herskovits’s criticisms had merit, others were distortions. Herskovits viewed Woodson’s characterization of African culture as predominantly monogamous, because “[p]olygamy does not obtain throughout Africa,” as special pleading. According to Herskovits, Woodson’s argument was designed to place Africans in a positive light, as polygamy was viewed negatively in the United States.<sup>148</sup> However, Herskovits’s characterization of Woodson’s argument was misleading. In his book, Woodson maintained that many Africans practiced monogamy because they could not afford more than one wife. He did not claim that polygamy was rare.<sup>149</sup>

Woodson’s response to Herskovits’s review, published in the *Journal of Negro History*, was equally tendentious.<sup>150</sup> Woodson noted that because Herskovits’s review contained “so many misinterpretations and misstatements,” he would deviate from his rule to ignore reviews of his work.<sup>151</sup> Then he argued that because his book did “not highly evaluate the theories of social scientists . . . and because the book claims for the Negro what the reviewer and most persons of his circle would deny as justly belonging to the record of the Negro, Dr. Herskovits has branded the work as lacking objectivity and charged with a strong anti-white prejudice.”<sup>152</sup> Woodson asserted that an anthropologist had no business reviewing the work of a historian because anthropology deals in theories, while “[h]istory deals with facts.” Then, paralleling his attack on Herskovits’s 1928 book, *The American Negro*, Woodson challenged the methods of physical anthropologists and, by implication, Herskovits: “The historian in this case is not much concerned with the accounts left by those who have gone into Africa, noting the hair, and the color of the



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native, and measuring his nose, his lips, and the projection of his jaw in order to classify Africans as non-white, half white, and almost white.”<sup>153</sup>

Relations between Herskovits and Woodson did not improve. In July 1942 Herskovits complained to Woodson that Woodson had failed to follow through on a promise made two years earlier to publish an article in the *Journal of Negro History* by Herskovits student Joseph Greenberg. Herskovits asked Woodson either to publish the paper or “return it to me immediately.”<sup>154</sup>

Although Herskovits’s relationship with Du Bois was outwardly less turbulent than with Woodson, it was also beset by conflict. Herskovits maligned the objectivity of Du Bois, most notably in the case of the Encyclopedia of the Negro project. The debate surrounding the plan to create an encyclopedia of the Negro during the 1930s and 1940s reveals the tensions over the control and direction of black studies. Whites and blacks, scholars and philanthropists, sought to advance their views of the proper scope and nature of knowledge regarding people of African descent.

Anson Phelps Stokes, the white president of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a small philanthropy established in 1911 and concerned with black education in Africa and the United States, revived the idea of a Negro encyclopedia in 1931. In 1909 Du Bois had unsuccessfully sought foundation funding for an Encyclopedia Africana.<sup>155</sup> The Phelps-Stokes Fund was a leading supporter of the interracial movement that emerged in the aftermath of World War I and the attendant violence against black civilians and soldiers. The main goal was to alleviate racial tensions and violence, not to challenge segregation. The idea for the Committee on Interracial Cooperation, formed in 1919, has been attributed to Thomas Jesse Jones and Robert R. Moton, the black director of Tuskegee Institute. Stokes justified the Negro encyclopedia by arguing that it would contribute “to the progress of the Negro and to the Interracial cause.”<sup>156</sup> The encyclopedia would focus mainly on black Americans, with some material devoted to Africa and other areas with significant black populations. It would include interpretive and biographical articles designed to illuminate black life in America.<sup>157</sup>

From the outset the project was suffused with controversy. The key issues were white versus black control and influence on the project, race-bound definitions of objectivity, and the question of activist scholarship. Twenty-two invitations—relatively equally divided between blacks and

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whites—to the initial meeting went to several presidents of black colleges, representatives of a number of philanthropies—including the GEB, the Rosenwald Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation—and scholars concerned with African Americans. Five of the invitees were associated with the Phelps-Stokes Fund. The fact that only five of those invited could be considered primarily scholars opened the project up to the charge that objective scholarship was not of paramount importance. Meanwhile, numerous scholars of the black experience were excluded, including Herskovits, Locke, Frazier, and, most notably, Du Bois and Woodson. The latter two, the most illustrious African American scholars of the time, were excluded from the initial meeting because of opposition from Thomas Jesse Jones.<sup>158</sup> Both Woodson and Du Bois had opposed the influence of Jones since his 1917 report recommending foundation support of vocational education, not liberal arts education, for blacks.<sup>159</sup> The exclusion of Woodson and Du Bois from the initial conference was indicative of the desire of some whites to control the direction of the project and limit the influence of strong advocates of black control. The exclusion of Woodson, Du Bois, Herskovits, Frazier, and Locke also pointed to the fact that most of the invitees were prominent university or foundation administrators, not scholars.

At the first meeting black participants, especially Walter White of the NAACP and Kelly Miller of Howard University, who were miffed at the absence of Du Bois and Woodson, induced the conferees to invite the two scholars to the next meeting.<sup>160</sup> Despite his disgust at being excluded from the initial conference, Du Bois decided to attend because of the importance of the project. Woodson, however, declined and proceeded to denounce the project as an attempt to undercut his own encyclopedia project. He was also angered by what he viewed as Thomas Jesse Jones's broader attempts to control research on Negroes.<sup>161</sup> Fairly quickly, Du Bois assumed a prominent position within the project, operating as second in command to Stokes and winning the position as editor, largely due to the strong support from the black members of the board who would not "even consider any other choice."<sup>162</sup>

Almost immediately Du Bois became the center of controversy as the white-controlled philanthropies and several white scholars expressed doubts about his objectivity. In order to offset Du Bois's authority as editor, the board of directors of the project set up an advisory board dominated by whites as a check on the project's, and particularly Du Bois's,

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perceived propagandistic tendencies.<sup>163</sup> Herskovits received an appointment as one of the two representatives (folklorist Elsie Clews Parsons was the other) of the NRC on the advisory board. Herskovits, who apparently did not seek the appointment, was brought on board to counter Du Bois and Stokes, who were perceived as not sufficiently committed to detached scholarship. Waldo Leland of the ACLS questioned the project coordinators' commitment to objectivity and applauded Herskovits's appointment as necessary to enforce a strong commitment to objectivity.<sup>164</sup>

As an adviser to the project, Herskovits encouraged black participation but discouraged black control. In April 1934 Herskovits suggested that Leland appoint a black member as ACLS's advisory board member. He told Leland, "My own feeling is that competent Negroes, if they can be found, should have as much a hand as possible in undertakings which affect their group, although I do not mean that I believe that competent Whites should not also be included." Herskovits recommended three friends: two blacks, economist Abram Harris and poet Sterling Brown, and one white, sociologist Donald Young.<sup>165</sup>

Leland, however, resisted Herskovits's recommendation: "I should be glad to suggest the appointment of a Negro if he seemed to be the most suitable representative of our interests, but the organization of the Encyclopaedia includes a very large Negro representation, as you know, and I understand that one of the editors will be a Negro."<sup>166</sup> Leland did not appoint any blacks to the advisory board.

Despite his support for black participation and his promise of cooperation to Du Bois, Herskovits moved to undercut him.<sup>167</sup> As Du Bois was marshalling written expressions of support for the encyclopedia from prominent whites and blacks, Herskovits, who had strong reservations about the project, began conspiring with his friend Donald Young of the SSRC to undermine the project.<sup>168</sup> Herskovits and Young thought that the board was too heavily weighted with individuals who did not have the proper commitment to objective scholarship. In addition, Herskovits believed that there was insufficient information available at that time to create an encyclopedia that would do justice to the subject. As a result, he argued, the encyclopedia would be "loaded with propaganda, considering . . . the people who are most active in it."<sup>169</sup> In making this accusation, Herskovits particularly targeted Du Bois, noting that "neither Du Bois nor most members of the backing crew are scientists at all, but

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uplifters.”<sup>170</sup> Based on their reservations about the project, Herskovits and Young skipped the May 1936 meeting of the advisory board.<sup>171</sup>

In June 1936 Herskovits and Young hatched a plan to jointly resign from the advisory board to protest the direction of the project.<sup>172</sup> They tried to persuade Elsie Clews Parsons to join them in the hope that “a few resignations might bring about a realization that not everyone is in agreement with the rather high-handed manner in which the thing is being pushed through.”<sup>173</sup> But Parsons was not convinced that Du Bois was merely a propagandist and resisted the resignation plan. She said she would first discuss the issue with Stokes, an old friend, and if Herskovits was right about Du Bois, then she would resign.<sup>174</sup>

Apparently, Parsons’s reticence put a stop to the resignation plan, although discussions continued. In August 1936 Herskovits criticized the project as unscientific, telling Parsons that it would “in all likelihood be loaded with the melioristic point of view of its backers.” Herskovits added that the advisory committees had no authority and could not restrain the excesses of those in charge. He asserted that Du Bois lacked “the necessary detachment for [a] job such as editing an encyclopaedia, even while giving him credit for all the ability and good intentions in the world.” Herskovits insisted that Du Bois, whom he misleadingly claimed was over seventy (he was sixty-eight), was too old for the job. He also charged, falsely, that Du Bois was chosen “without any consultation with anyone, either on the Advisory Board or the Board of Directors.”<sup>175</sup> In fact, the board of directors had elected Du Bois the editor.<sup>176</sup>

E. Franklin Frazier and Ralph Bunche criticized the project along similar lines as Herskovits. They questioned the large role played by nonscholars and the foundations and the small number of scholars involved in the planning. In addition, Frazier argued that the prospectus had been created in a haphazard manner, reflecting the absence of competent scholars in the planning. Du Bois biographer David L. Lewis has suggested that there was merit in this criticism and that Du Bois probably recognized “the datedness, imprecision, and objectively indicting incompleteness of the work he and his assistants, Irene Diggs and Rayford Logan, had scrambled to assemble.” This result was due to the limits on time and funding within which Du Bois was operating. Frazier also insisted that “the planning and the execution of the Encyclopaedia should devolve upon scholars and not upon interracial ‘politicians’ or ‘statesmen,’ white or black. It is no task for ‘big Negroes’ or whites

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because of their good-will.” He called for a new conference of “competent scholars” to rework the entire plan.<sup>177</sup> In fact, Frazier’s views partially mirrored those of Du Bois, who also preferred an encyclopedia created by scholars and not by politicians. For Du Bois, however, the two overriding goals were black editorial control and completion of the encyclopedia.

The opposition to the encyclopedia under Du Bois’s editorship by young black and white scholars like Frazier, Bunche, Herskovits, and Young was indicative of a generational rift. During the mid-1930s younger black scholars, including Frazier and Bunche, influenced by the catastrophic impact of the Great Depression, employed a Marxist critique of American capitalism as exploitative of both white and black workers. In order to improve the lot of African Americans, they argued for an interracial working-class alliance and rejected the older generation’s focus on racial solidarity as misguided and romanticized. In 1936 Frazier attacked Du Bois as only “interested in the welfare of the privileged black middle class.” Moreover, Frazier rejected Du Bois’s call for racial solidarity and black nationalism.<sup>178</sup> Herskovits, like Frazier and Bunche, supported an interracial working-class alliance. In a 1937 radio broadcast, Herskovits asserted that more publicity should be given to attempts by the Committee for Industrial Organization and the Southern Tenant Farmers’ unions to form working-class alliances between blacks and whites.<sup>179</sup>

Realizing that Du Bois’s elevation to editor in chief might alienate the foundations, several white members of the board suggested that his position be made dependent on his promise to work with a white associate editor. Charles T. Loram, conservative chair of the Department of Race Relations at Yale University, maintained that because of Du Bois’s “reputation . . . as a militant protagonist of certain ideas,” a white associate editor was necessary to temper Du Bois’s objectives. Despite the opposition of some of the black members to this view, notably Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, the board appointed white sociologist Robert Park associate editor.<sup>180</sup> In 1938, after Park’s resignation—due to age, he was seventy-four—white sociologist Guy B. Johnson was elected to replace him as co-editor of the encyclopedia. Stokes maintained that Johnson filled the need for a younger man to work with Du Bois, that Johnson had the support of the black and white board members, including Du Bois, and that the board concurred “that he [Johnson] was the best qualified man in the country to serve in

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this position.”<sup>181</sup> Herskovits approved of the choice of Johnson to be co-editor.<sup>182</sup>

While Herskovits insisted that only he and Young were concerned that the encyclopedia project was flawed by an uplifter mentality, the philanthropic foundations being asked to finance the project voiced similar worries. During 1934–35 the project’s funding requests faced strong opposition from the Carnegie Corporation and the GEB.<sup>183</sup> Jackson Davis of the GEB questioned Du Bois’s commitment to objectivity. He also argued that the encyclopedia project would be viewed by most southern whites as an aggressive push for rights, would lead to increased race consciousness by blacks, and thus would adversely affect race relations. Echoing Herskovits’s views, the GEB maintained that there was not enough scholarship on Negroes to justify an encyclopedia, and as Du Bois’s writings had been included in the *Dictionary of American Biography* and the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, a special Negro encyclopedia was unnecessary. In April 1934 the GEB denied the encyclopedia project’s request for funding.<sup>184</sup>

Under the leadership of President Frederick Keppel, the Carnegie Corporation also refused to finance the project. Conflicts between the conferees on the project along racial lines and the foundation’s experience of cost overruns with the previously funded *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* set Keppel against the project.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, Alvin Johnson, associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, convinced Keppel that there was not enough material on Negroes to justify an encyclopedia. Johnson told Keppel, “These projected four volumes of mediocre detail seem to me an incredible malversation of white paper.”<sup>186</sup> These denials of funding demonstrate the desire of the white-controlled foundations to circumscribe the permissible bounds of knowledge. According to white arbiters of “legitimate” scholarship, a Negro encyclopedia would be inflammatory, inferior, inappropriate, incomplete, and insignificant. In view of foundation opposition and the continuing depression, the encyclopedia board decided to postpone future funding requests pending more preliminary work.<sup>187</sup>

Despite the setback, Du Bois and Stokes continued to move forward with the project, hoping eventually to reverse the foundations’ funding decisions. By 1939 Du Bois had learned of Herskovits’s reservations about the project and tried to reassure Herskovits of his intentions to be fair-minded. Du Bois told Herskovits, “I can assure you that . . . a proper

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balance will be maintained between the claims of philanthropy on the one hand and the scientific demands of sociology and anthropology.” Du Bois, however, maintained that the job of editing an encyclopedia required that the editorial staff be responsible for the “practical editing. . . . No work of the sort can be carried on its essential details by a committee and upon this I am going to insist.”<sup>188</sup> Herskovits replied that he was pleased that Stokes would be consulted and that he only wanted to be consulted on who would be writing anthropology articles.<sup>189</sup>

Nevertheless, Herskovits continued to criticize the project. In 1940 he told Du Bois that anthropological material was being neglected, many important studies were being ignored, and irrelevant topics were being included. Herskovits could not understand how the Suriname Maroons were excluded and an article on Borneo, which had no connection with Negroes, was included. Herskovits was particularly agitated to find no mention of Franz Boas; Elsie Clews Parsons, “the outstanding authority on Negro Folklore”; or T. Wingate Todd, “who has studied the Negro physical type more carefully than anyone else.” Herskovits told Du Bois, disingenuously, that “the only reason why” he had “not resigned from the advisory Committee and recommended that the organization I represent, the National Research Council, withdraw from sponsorship, is my personal confidence in you.” He then advised Du Bois to make sure that certain previously discussed changes in administration were made so that the “scientific point of view will be given due attention.”<sup>190</sup>

Ironically, in December 1939, when Herskovits was proposed as a possible member of the Encyclopedia project’s board of directors, he was criticized as lacking the proper objectivity for the position. Two members had recently died, one white (Joel Spingarn) and one black (Benjamin Brawley), and as replacements were to be selected by race, a new white member was needed. When Herskovits’s name was introduced, C. T. Loram “raised . . . the question whether the label, ‘pro-Negro’ was not so definitely pinned upon Prof. Herskovits that the suspicion might be created in some circles that the Encyclopedia might be lacking in that objectivity which the Committee considers one of its principal aims.” Loram’s comment underscores the degree to which egalitarian scholars of black studies, even those like Herskovits who eschewed activism and toed a strict line of detached scholarship, faced questions about their objectivity. Responding to Loram’s statement, an unnamed board member suggested that Herskovits’s perspective could

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be balanced by selecting another nominee who had a different point of view. Mordecai Johnson disagreed, asserting that a pro-Negro designation should be regarded as a recommendation and not an objection, noting that no book could be written without bias. Du Bois reminded the board that “the question of bias has been frequently raised in connection with the writings on anthropology by and about Jews,” corresponding to the current discussion over bias regarding writings by and about Negroes.<sup>191</sup> Du Bois’s comment may have been a veiled suggestion that Loram’s opposition to Herskovits was based on anti-Semitism. Stokes then insisted that Herskovits’s election to the SSRC proved that his objectivity was not in question. (Whether Herskovits was elected to the SSRC for his objectivity or for his connections is debatable. His close friend Donald Young was a key official at the SSRC.) Evidently, Stokes’s argument proved persuasive, as Herskovits was nominated.<sup>192</sup> Along with Herskovits, anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski was nominated to the board with the idea that his views would balance those of Herskovits.<sup>193</sup> Herskovits, however, declined the nomination to the board, maintaining that his preference was to remain on the advisory board.<sup>194</sup> Herskovits’s response accords with his reservations about the encyclopedia. Malinowski and black anthropologist Allison Davis did accept their nominations.<sup>195</sup>

Meanwhile, Herskovits acted to derail efforts by the encyclopedia board to move the project forward. When Madison Bentley of the Library of Congress, who had been approached about doing some editing for the encyclopedia through the Writer’s Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), asked Herskovits for his impressions, Herskovits criticized the project at length. He advised Bentley that the editors of the encyclopedia were incompetent to deal with the African material. He also questioned the evenhandedness of the editors, arguing that the topics selected for articles indicated that the encyclopedia would be “unrepresentative of the various points of view concerning the study of the Negro and Negro problems” and thus would fall short of an objective rendering.<sup>196</sup>

In 1941 the GEB and the Carnegie Corporation declined Stokes’s request for \$16,000 each to get the encyclopedia started by working through the Writer’s Project. Charles Dollard of the Carnegie Corporation told Stokes that the Myrdal study took all funding in the “Negro field.”<sup>197</sup> Moreover, Dollard contended that Du Bois was “a jealous, self-



centered person” and therefore was unfit to be editor. Dollard also thought Du Bois was too old, at over seventy-one, to start on a multiyear project.<sup>198</sup>

Although there is no other direct record of additional correspondence by Herskovits on the subject, other evidence indicates that he continued to work to undermine the project. In 1951 black historian Rayford Logan recorded in his journal a conversation that took place at a luncheon that he attended with Herskovits, Ray Billington, Richard Leopold, Joseph Greenberg, and Edgar T. Thompson, editor of *Race Relations and the Race Problem*. Logan wrote, “In the course of the conversation Mel [Herskovits] brought up the question of the Encyclopedia of the Negro. I remarked to Mel that he did not know the history of previous efforts. ‘Oh yes, I do,’ said Mel. ‘I was the hatchet man, don’t you remember?’ I pretended to remember. But I learned then for the first time who had killed the project just when we (Dr. Du Bois and I) felt certain that the Carnegie Foundation [*sic*] was going to give the project \$150,000.”<sup>199</sup> Herskovits’s comment to Logan indicated that he believed Logan would have opposed the project as he and some of the other younger black intellectuals did. But while Bunche and Frazier opposed the project, Logan supported it. Moreover, Logan had assisted Du Bois on the project.<sup>200</sup> Either Herskovits was unaware of this fact, which seems unlikely, or he was demonstrating his arrogance.

His boasting notwithstanding, Herskovits was just one of many individuals and organizations who contributed to the demise of the encyclopedia project. (The combined efforts of key figures at the Carnegie Corporation and the GEB, along with the opposition of Herskovits and Young, represented the dominant positions regarding the question of objective scholarship and academic control with respect to Negro studies.) Herskovits’s characterization of an encyclopedia edited by Du Bois as propagandistic and unscientific paralleled the position taken by the Carnegie Corporation and the GEB in denying funding. The philanthropies had concluded that the project under Du Bois’s editorship would be an exercise in propaganda, not science. A project of this importance would not be funded if a black scholar-activist led it. During this period major studies related to African Americans were funded only when white scholars controlled them. Rayford Logan later recalled that in those days, “the word of one white man could determine whether a project concerning Negroes could be approved or not.”<sup>201</sup> The Carnegie Corporation’s

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study of African Americans did not even consider a black director; Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal led it.

Throughout the 1930s Herskovits continued to embrace the non-activist position in Negro studies. When the Carnegie Corporation decided to fund a large-scale study of American Negroes, Herskovits sought to influence the study to focus on Negro culture and eschew a meliorist perspective. The Carnegie Corporation, however, defined the Negro study as a problem-solving study and turned to Myrdal, who embraced the idea of social engineering, to direct it.<sup>202</sup>

Herskovits rejected the idea that change could be accomplished through social engineering. He believed that social change could not be forced unless this change was in line with economic and historical forces. In February 1944 Herskovits argued, “the actions of great men [and women] are only effective if they are in line with the traditions of their society at a given time.” He insisted that the woman suffrage movement did not succeed “because of the ‘agitation’ of the small group who led the suffrage movement after the turn of this century.” Rather, the development of industrialization made women’s restricted role outmoded and led to the successful movement for suffrage.<sup>203</sup> Thus change comes only when a culture is ready for it, rendering social engineering futile.

When Herskovits realized that his own research and notions of detached social science would play only a peripheral role in the Carnegie study, he sought to form an organization to influence black studies toward a purely scholarly agenda grounded in objectivity. He found support within the ACLS, which was financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, for his perspective. In 1939 Herskovits received ACLS approval to sponsor and finance a “conference on Negro studies” that would form a permanent committee to promote interdisciplinary Negro studies. Herskovits hoped that the conference would place scholars of Negro studies “in a much more strategic position to encourage the continuation of scientific work . . . if we are organized and ready prior to the appearance of the [Carnegie-Myrdal] report.”<sup>204</sup>

In setting up the conference on Negro studies, Herskovits invited only scholars of Negro studies, not foundation officials, politicians, or social activists.<sup>205</sup> In this way, he distinguished his conference from the initial Encyclopedia of the Negro project meeting. Herskovits sent invitations to a mixed group of black and white scholars including political scientist Ralph Bunche; anthropologists Elsie Clews Parsons, W. Montague

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Cobb, Lorenzo Turner, and George Simpson; philosopher Alain Locke; economists Abram Harris and Gunnar Myrdal; historians Lawrence D. Reddick, Harvey Wish, and Herbert Aptheker; and sociologists Donald Young, Charles S. Johnson, and E. Franklin Frazier.<sup>206</sup> In January 1940 Herskovits suggested inviting Carter Woodson, commenting, "He will not make the Conference any easier, but he has worked long faithfully at the problems of Negro history and I think he ought to be included."<sup>207</sup> Despite his willingness to invite Woodson, Herskovits excluded Du Bois. Given his recent criticism of Du Bois and the encyclopedia project as falling short of objective scholarship, this is not surprising.

A number of invitees, including Myrdal, Woodson, Parsons, and Young, did not attend.<sup>208</sup> Woodson told Herskovits that he could not attend the conference due to previous engagements, noting, "At that time I shall probably be thousands of miles away from Washington."<sup>209</sup> Woodson's biographer has held that Woodson's refusal to attend was based on his belief that Herskovits controlled the conference and would dominate any committee that was formed.<sup>210</sup>

Myrdal also refused to attend the conference because of his intellectual differences with Herskovits.<sup>211</sup> Myrdal believed that this conference would detract from the Carnegie study. He told Bunche that "we should steer clear of this before we know more about it. I am not at all interested in having our study, or parts of it, discussed, particularly if we are not ourselves in control of the setting."<sup>212</sup> As it turned out, Bunche did attend, but the Myrdal study was not discussed, perhaps because Bunche had heeded Myrdal's admonition and steered the conversation away from that subject.<sup>213</sup>

The initial conference on Negro studies, held in March 1940 in Washington DC with Herskovits presiding, decided to form a permanent Committee on Negro Studies (CONS) under the auspices of the ACLS. Herskovits was named chair. Donald Young and up to five other members would serve on the committee.<sup>214</sup>

In setting up an alternative to the Carnegie Corporation study, Herskovits held to his view that scholarship could be pursued in a climate divorced from politics. Although as chair of the CONS Herskovits acted to advance research in black studies, his strict adherence to detached scholarship sidetracked activism by members of the committee, who sought to challenge the exclusion of black scholars from southern ar-

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chives and libraries. By taking this position, Herskovits undercut his own egalitarian values that motivated his work in anthropology.

The committee's largest and most significant project for the advancement of research in black history was the microfilming of nineteenth-century black newspapers and magazines, initially proposed by historian Lawrence D. Reddick in 1944.<sup>215</sup> To head the project, the committee hired Armistead Pride, director of the School of Journalism at Lincoln University (the first journalism school at a black college) and the first black journalist to serve as city editor of a white newspaper.<sup>216</sup> Following a request prepared by Herskovits, in October 1945 the GEB contributed \$9,000 to the CONS to pay for microfilming and donation of microfilm copies to several black colleges—Howard, Atlanta, Lincoln, Dillard—and the Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library.<sup>217</sup> The project was completed in 1947.<sup>218</sup> The accessibility of these pre-1900 black newspapers “revolutionized research into Afro-American history for just about every topic except slavery and opened important windows on the activities and thought of black Americans.”<sup>219</sup> In 1949 the committee authorized Pride to resume the microfilming project, with a focus on twentieth-century black newspapers, using funds received from the sale of microfilm copies.<sup>220</sup>

In 1945 the CONS and the Joint-Committee on Latin American Studies undertook a project to create a bibliography for Latin American Negro studies with funding from the Rosenwald Fund. Herskovits served as general project director, and Howard University archivist Dorothy Porter served as editor.<sup>221</sup> The committee also supported publication of monographs dealing with black studies, notably Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944).<sup>222</sup>

At Herskovits's behest, the committee decided to support the publication of reports on documents and research problems to help advance Negro studies. The first number in the series, *A Guide to Documents in the National Archives: For Negro Studies*, compiled by Paul Lewinson, was published in 1947.<sup>223</sup> The committee also arranged for Ernst Posner of American University to supervise a graduate student's preparation of “an experimental pilot project, a calendar of Negro materials in a single Record Group in the National Archives.” The committee distributed this calendar to several colleges that were asked to consider doing similar calendars of their own collections.<sup>224</sup> On the recommendation of Eric Wil-

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liams, the committee considered a project to microfilm historical documents in the West Indies that were "in danger of loss and destruction."<sup>225</sup>

While advancing research in black studies, Herskovits maintained control over the committee's activities and used his power to curtail activism based on his strict adherence to detached scholarship. During the initial conference, historians Herbert Aptheker and Lawrence D. Reddick suggested that the conferees take a stand against the limitations placed on black scholars doing research in the South.<sup>226</sup> The records of the conference indicate that Herskovits spoke next and changed the subject. No more mention of this topic was made.<sup>227</sup> Aptheker recently stated that he did not remember Herskovits's reaction to this issue but was "sure Herskovits would *not* have opposed proper action."<sup>228</sup> A summary report of this conference issued the following year concluded that the CONS "could aid in making possible greater facilities for Negro students by breaking down or circumventing social barriers that make their work difficult."<sup>229</sup> Nonetheless, the recommendations designed to assist black researchers in the South were never carried out and did not enjoy Herskovits's stated support.

In July 1940 Reddick published an article calling for bringing court cases against tax-supported libraries that excluded blacks. He also challenged the ACLS and the SSRC to support his recommendation that "any grants-in-aid which may come from the Federal Government or from the Foundations should carry the proviso that Negro scholars shall have access to the materials."<sup>230</sup> Apparently the two learned societies did not respond to Reddick's challenge.

At the 1944 committee meeting, Herskovits again took the lead in opposing an activist agenda. He maintained that "the difference between scholarly studies and programs of action was so profound that it would not be practicable to operate a committee which would have to cover both kinds of work." Historian James F. King, "though accepting the principle that the work of the present Committee was not to be a program of action in such matters as racial relations, pointed out that scholarly work has often had an indirect influence on programs of action and on popular attitudes."<sup>231</sup> Once again, action was stopped.

The committee's decisions on membership demonstrate Herskovits's use of power in attempting to control the direction of Negro studies and advancing research while resisting increased black influence and calls for action. Young and Herskovits chose the initial members of the commit-

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tee: black English professor Sterling Brown, white psychologist Otto Klineberg, white Latin Americanist Richard Pattee, black historian Lawrence D. Reddick, and black anthropologist Lorenzo Turner.<sup>232</sup> This meant that there would be four whites and three blacks. Herskovits claimed that he included Sterling Brown on the committee instead of Ralph Bunche or Abram Harris because he wanted someone versed in literature and music.<sup>233</sup> Given the intensity of disagreement over African cultural survivals between Herskovits and Harris at the initial conference, it may be that Herskovits wanted to exclude those whom he might find difficult to control. Moreover, in choosing Reddick, who completed his Ph.D. in 1939, to serve on the committee, Herskovits selected a junior historian.<sup>234</sup> He did not suggest senior black scholars like Du Bois or Woodson, who would be more likely to resist his control. Herskovits also sought to consolidate his control of the committee. In order to avoid “an institutional tie-in with Howard” and perhaps limit the influence of Howard University scholars, he suggested holding the committee meeting at the ACLS office instead of at Howard.<sup>235</sup> In addition, Herskovits tried to dictate the direction of discussion, telling Daugherty of the ACLS in May 1941, “I am sure that I will have no difficulty keeping the discussion more or less to the line I have indicated.”<sup>236</sup>

Herskovits’s imperious ways did not go unnoticed by some black scholars, who sought to curtail his authority over black studies. The tensions over Herskovits’s role as chair of the CONS came to a head during the planning for an international conference on Negro studies in Cuba. Rayford Logan was on the advisory committee to the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), headed by Nelson Rockefeller of the Department of State, which was funding the conference.<sup>237</sup> Kenneth Janken has observed that “Herskovits’s [authoritarian] reputation was the reason Logan had the conference’s project authorization amended to oblige the organizers to consult with him, especially on the matter of delegates.”<sup>238</sup> The State Department’s approval of funding stipulated that the ACLS obtain “the approval of the Coordinator or his duly authorized representative [Rayford Logan], to select the personnel of the conference.”<sup>239</sup> Logan told John Clark of the OCIAA of his “opposition to the Mel Herskovits gang” based on his belief that “the delegates to the Havana (changed to Port-au-Prince) conference were Herskovits’s hand-picked friends.”<sup>240</sup>

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Logan's assertion that Herskovits picked his friends is backed up by the ACLS's choices to attend the conference, essentially the members of the CONS who had been chosen by Herskovits. The American delegates to the conference were to be Herskovits, Klineberg, Sterling Brown, Richard Pattee, Lawrence D. Reddick, Lorenzo Turner, Donald Young, D. H. Daugherty, and musicologist Charles Seeger. There would be six white delegates and three black delegates, all of whom were, as Logan claimed, members of the CONS and/or friends of Herskovits's.<sup>241</sup>

Logan complained to the ACLS that the foundations' and learned societies' selection practices continued to minimize black input. At a meeting with the ACLS, Du Bois — who had been brought by Logan — “pointed out that in the old days Negroes were not even consulted on Negro questions. *Now*, white people usually relied upon some white person or some Negro to advise them. In this instance, that person seemed to be Herskovits who was packing committees with his personal friends.”<sup>242</sup> Logan told Clark of the OCIAA, “It is difficult to understand, for example, how Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois has been consistently ignored by this committee.” Logan recommended that the conference selections be changed.<sup>243</sup>

Although the ACLS agreed to Logan's attendance at the conference, they rejected Du Bois's participation. Echoing their reasoning in the encyclopedia project, the ACLS argued that the conference was designed to support “a scientific approach to Negro studies and that we had not considered it necessary to represent groups or factions, but only to secure the attendance of scholars whose interest was scientific and who would be particularly useful for the purposes of the Conference.” After he was informed of Leland's responses, Logan took the matter up with Nelson Rockefeller, who told Leland that he wanted Du Bois to be invited to the conference.<sup>244</sup>

Logan's experience with the CONS increased his resentment of what he viewed as Herskovits's authoritarian manner. In 1943 Hugh Smythe, a graduate student under Herskovits at Northwestern, asked Logan for his help in getting the support of the OCIAA to override roadblocks created by Honduras that Smythe was facing as a black scholar planning anthropological fieldwork in that country. After advising Smythe that he did not have any authority in that area, Logan told Smythe that Herskovits, “who has appointed himself the final arbiter on all matters pertaining to Negro scholarship, could assist you in a much larger measure than I can. In fact, his animosity against me — the initial reasons for which I do not

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know — are such that you would do well not to let him know that you have ever known me.”<sup>245</sup>

Herskovits's decisions on membership in the CONS generally limited black participation in order to maintain control and suppress activism. From 1944 to 1947 Herskovits and ACLS officials controlled membership decisions and ensured a white majority. In 1944 Pattee and Klineberg were dropped from the committee because they were undertaking work outside the United States and would be unable to attend meetings. Herskovits resisted adding a black scholar and creating a black majority. Instead, he recommended James F. King, the white managing editor of the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, who was moving to the University of California at Berkeley after two years at Northwestern, and Kenneth W. Porter of Vassar College, a white historian of blacks in the American West and relations between blacks and American Indians. Despite the large number of prominent black scholars available, none were chosen. Rayford Logan, who had recently published *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776–1891* (1941), was apparently not even considered.<sup>246</sup> At one point ACLS official Daugherty suggested a black replacement, telling Herskovits, “with you to ride herd . . . a black balance might be a good one.” Herskovits, however, resisted Daugherty's arguments and continued to support King to replace Pattee, explaining, “I would be perfectly willing to put a Negro historian on, but we have one in Reddick, and there isn't another of his stature or King's that I know anything about. So that's that.”<sup>247</sup>

In fact, there were many black historians of Reddick's or King's stature who were known to Herskovits. Besides Du Bois, Woodson, and Logan, black historians who had published important works by 1944 included Lorenzo Greene, *The Negro Wage Earner* (1930); John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790–1860* (1943); Charles Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850–1925* (1927); and A. A. Taylor, *The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction* (1924) and *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (1926).<sup>248</sup> Although Herskovits knew of most of these black historians, they were not his friends.<sup>249</sup> As a result, he may not have considered them for membership. The calculations made by Herskovits and his white friends at the ACLS in recruiting black scholars for membership may be illuminated by a questionnaire filled out in jest by Donald Goodchild and sent to Herskovits. Under the heading



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“Principal field of interest in Negro Studies,” Goodchild wrote, “How to avoid offending them.”<sup>250</sup>

Herskovits also opposed black anthropologist Allison Davis of the University of Chicago for membership on the committee.<sup>251</sup> Herskovits explained, “I hear he is very difficult to work with as a member of a committee, and I feel that in his approach to Negro studies he stumbles over so many complexes that it would be very difficult for us to work with him.”<sup>252</sup>

Herskovits used his influence to add two white scholars, King and Porter, to the committee. Apparently, King was added to the committee without a vote of the membership. In fact, no discussion of the membership change was recorded in the minutes of the meeting.<sup>253</sup> Herskovits met separately with Daugherty, Young, Goodchild, and Brown to gain strong support for Porter’s membership before the official meeting in which Porter was added. Thus Herskovits prevented a black majority by ensuring that four white members and one black member — not the full committee — made the membership decision. In this way the “difficult” Davis was excluded from the committee.<sup>254</sup>

In 1947 the membership question became more conflicted with the deterioration of black-white relations on the committee. Herskovits began to express irritation with some of the black members of the committee — Turner, Brown, and Reddick — for inactivity and lack of responsiveness to memos.<sup>255</sup> Meanwhile, race-based voting on new members developed as blacks argued for more black representation. When Herskovits got his white friend political scientist Paul Lewinson nominated for membership, none of the black members supported him, while all the whites did. Porter and Young approved of Lewinson, while Turner and Brown did not mail in their ballots. Reddick abstained, arguing that there should be more black representation. Herskovits claimed to be sympathetic to increasing black membership but did not press the point, noting Donald Young’s opposition to considering race as a criterion for membership.<sup>256</sup> Once again, the white majority continued, as Lewinson was added to the committee.<sup>257</sup>

In 1948 black-white relations continued to deteriorate, leading Herskovits and Daugherty to consider disbanding the committee. They decided not to do so. Daugherty was convinced that killing the committee “would probably have created misunderstanding and some ill will.” Herskovits agreed to add black historian Eric Williams to replace Porter,

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due to the expense of bringing Porter in from Texas.<sup>258</sup> In 1949 Armistead Pride replaced Turner.<sup>259</sup> The committee membership now consisted of Herskovits, Brown, Lewinson, Reddick, Williams, Young, and Pride, with Daugherty as secretary.<sup>260</sup> Despite the presence of a black majority in 1948 and 1949, the major decisions of the committee continued to be made by Herskovits and his white associates.<sup>261</sup>

The contentiousness over membership and the committee's role in fostering black scholars' integration into the academic community finally led to the dissolution of the CONS. In 1946 planning began for a conference entitled "The Negro and the Community of Scholars." It would examine the extent to which Negro scholars were publishing in white journals, participating in white associations, and gaining access to archival material in libraries. Daugherty told Herskovits that Sterling Brown was somewhat unclear if "he wants to go all the way" on this agenda.<sup>262</sup> After some initial enthusiasm for the conference, Herskovits expressed misgivings about the themes. He now wanted the conference to exclude any discussion of black scholars' access to archives, academic associations, and journals. Herskovits later concluded that he could not "quite see what our Committee could do in integrating the Negro scholar in the general community." Indeed, Herskovits suggested that the committee cancel the conference. Meanwhile, Reddick argued against canceling the conference in a "long letter" to Daugherty.<sup>263</sup>

At the committee's final meeting in March 1950, the conference was canceled, and the committee agreed to its own dissolution. After the meeting Herskovits wrote Daugherty that "certainly the fact that we were able to talk over procedures the night before made it possible for us to vote with a sureness that would otherwise not have been possible." Thus Herskovits and Daugherty disregarded Reddick's opposition and acted to cancel the conference and stop the committee from taking an active stance in integrating blacks into the white-controlled academic community.<sup>264</sup> To forestall action by the committee against the limitations on black scholars, Daugherty and Herskovits ensured the committee's demise. Daugherty reported that the issues handled by the committee would probably be handled by other ACLS committees.<sup>265</sup> Herskovits later wrote that the committee's composition had undermined its chances of doing a proper job, a job that did not include addressing the limits placed on black scholars.<sup>266</sup> According to Daugherty, the committee's dissolution was based on the notion that Negro studies

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should more properly be integrated into general studies. Negro music would be dealt with in the general Committee on Musicology, and no special committee on Negroes was needed to reinforce Negro studies. Daugherty continued, "Ideally, Negro history is 'history,' Negro music is 'music.'"<sup>267</sup> These other committees, however, had little or, in most cases, no black representation, and therefore controversial issues like restrictions on black scholars would be ignored. As Robert L. Harris Jr. has pointed out, it is ironic that while Herskovits and Daugherty had acted to avoid the question of the integration of black scholars in the mainstream academic community, they now justified the committee's dissolution on the grounds that Negro studies should be integrated into general studies.<sup>268</sup> In August 1950 Charles Odegaard, executive director of the ACLS, announced that the ACLS Board of Directors had terminated the CONS in accordance with Herskovits's recommendation.<sup>269</sup>

Herskovits's role in the development of Negro studies underscores the complexity of his influence. Believing in the rightness of his position, he unflinchingly held to his embrace of objective, detached scholarship. His professional authority as an objective scholar strengthened his attacks on racist and culturalist scholarship. At the same time, his professional status permitted him to develop black studies in a way that emphasized blacks as active agents in creating their own cultures. But by upholding a strict notion of detached scholarship that rejected social activism and in his desire to control the direction of black studies, Herskovits reinforced the status quo.

Herskovits's views and actions in the Encyclopedia of the Negro project demonstrate the paternalistic role he played in attempting to control black studies and imprint his own vision on the discipline. By doing so, Herskovits tended to limit the parameters of Negro studies by conforming to a definition of objectivity that marginalized black scholar/activists, in this case Du Bois. Du Bois had resolved the dilemma of black scholars by challenging black inferiority through his protest politics and his scholarly publications. But, as a result, he was often labeled a propagandist.

Herskovits's insistence that scholars separate politics from scholarship denied the political nature of scholarly inquiry. During the 1930s, moreover, the academic world was suffused with racial politics. The professionalization of social science limited access, and in a society that accepted a racial hierarchy, blacks were often denied entrance to the world

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of knowledge-elites.<sup>270</sup> Few blacks had access to the Ph.D., and fewer still obtained positions at northern universities. Almost none were employed as professors at the major research universities. James McKee has pointed out that black scholars like Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier had to accommodate to the prevailing sociological perspective that had been created by white sociologists. When black scholars deviated from the accepted perspective, as they sometimes did, the profession ignored them.<sup>271</sup> When Du Bois embraced activism in the form of social protest, he was labeled a propagandist and thus marginalized. In this way, Herskovits and the foundations criticized Du Bois as falling short of objectivity and undermined the encyclopedia project.

Thus, in his advisory role for the Encyclopedia of the Negro project and especially as chair of the CONS, Herskovits sometimes impeded efforts to challenge the isolation of black scholars and black scholarship. In this connection, Kenneth Janken has observed that "Herskovits . . . did little to integrate African-American scholars into the mainstream."<sup>272</sup> Tragically, Herskovits's notions about detached scholarship served to undercut his own egalitarianism by curtailing efforts to break down racist barriers to black scholars. Yet in his promotion of black studies and his support for black scholars' research, Herskovits helped build the groundwork for a more inclusive and egalitarian social science.



## The Postwar Expansion of African Studies

War, blessed war, had come to my generation, and nothing ever would be the same. — Alfred Kazin

**A**MERICA'S INVOLVEMENT in the Second World War and its emergence as a global power during the 1940s and 1950s transformed academic social science. The exigencies of war and the government's need for foreign area experts convinced many social scientists, including Herskovits, to relinquish their earlier commitment to detached scholarship and serve their country. At the same time, American involvement in the Second World War and the Cold War necessitated the creation of area studies programs—initially financed by the major philanthropic foundations—to provide additional specialists so that the United States could implement policies to serve its worldwide interests. These developments provided Herskovits with the opportunity to promote the creation of African studies programs in the United States. Yet the foundations' interest in African studies induced Herskovits to curtail his study of African American cultures. Indeed, the anthropologist did no fieldwork in the Americas after World War II.

During the postwar era Herskovits succeeded in parlaying the increased attention to Africa into substantial gains for African studies. His expertise and interest in the expansion of African studies made him a key player in the development of foundation-backed African studies programs. By 1948 Herskovits had established the first major interdisciplinary African studies program in America. In 1957 he played a pivotal role in the establishment of the African Studies Association (ASA) and became its first president.

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At times Herskovits's desire to control the direction of African studies impelled him to criticize other institutions that he viewed as competition for scarce resources. By doing so, Herskovits acted to control the production of knowledge as he had done during the Encyclopedia of the Negro project. In this case, during the Second World War Herskovits questioned funding proposals that Fisk University and the University of Pennsylvania submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation to establish their own African studies programs.

Herskovits's cultural relativist philosophy underpinned his view of African studies and international affairs. He considered cultural relativism as perhaps the most significant contribution that anthropologists had made to society.<sup>1</sup> In his most important postwar book, *Man and His Works* (1948), he defined cultural relativism as the principle that "evaluations [of cultures] are relative to the cultural background out of which they arise."<sup>2</sup> This was true because "[j]udgments are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his own enculturation."<sup>3</sup> Therefore cultures cannot be ranked in a hierarchy, since evaluations of cultures by outsiders would be distorted by the evaluator's ethnocentrism. Through extensive fieldwork, cultural anthropologists had documented the diversity of cultural practices and institutions and "the essential dignity of all human cultures."<sup>4</sup> In 1940 Herskovits cautioned against ranking cultures on the basis of ethnocentrism: "Now . . . don't get the idea that we're superior to primitive people. Oh, we have more gadgets, more tools, more implements of destruction, more people in insane asylums. But every people thinks their ways are best. The only real test is survival. And everyone on earth has survived at least to the present. Primitive peoples have philosophies as complex as ours. But they start with different premises. And their premises are just as good as ours."<sup>5</sup> On the basis of those tenets, Herskovits argued that the West must not impose its ideas, its programs, or its will on Africa.

Herskovits's vision for African studies contrasted with that of American policymakers and most foundation officials, who were motivated by Cold War strategy, not what was good for Africa and Africans. Herskovits realized that the postwar era was a pivotal one for Africa, with the continent rapidly moving toward independence. He argued that African self-determination and decolonization were in the interest of both the United States and Africa because they would improve the chances for international peace. Although he benefited from the rise of African stud-

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ies, Herskovits criticized the Cold War assumptions on which these developments were based. Scientific study, divorced from narrow Cold War concerns, could be employed to assist Africa in its transition to political independence. African studies programs could provide Americans with a better understanding of Africans and Africa.

American interest in African studies and area studies developed in four stages. Prior to the Second World War, a few individual scholars, including Herskovits, promoted African studies with relatively little assistance from philanthropic foundations or the federal government. Area studies, in general, received little attention at American universities.<sup>6</sup> As war spread through Europe, Asia, and Africa, however, increased interest in these regions provided an initial stimulus to area studies. During the late 1940s the beginning of the Cold War and America's newfound global influence led to the foundation-backed establishment of area studies programs at a few universities. In the 1950s the heightening of Cold War tensions — caused in large part by the outbreak of hostilities in Korea and the Soviets' launching of the *Sputnik* satellite — convinced the Ford Foundation and the federal government to provide massive financial support that institutionalized area studies programs. Both the foundations and the government believed that the national security of the United States demanded area studies' specialists to provide expert knowledge to policymakers to help fight the Cold War. As Edward Berman has observed, "the foundations frequently acted as the intermediaries between area specialists and government agencies in matters pertaining to national security."<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the growing strength of African independence movements during the 1950s compelled government and foundation officials to focus their attention on Africa. Following his trip to Africa in 1957, Vice President Richard Nixon told President Dwight Eisenhower that the continent "was the new area of conflict 'between the forces of freedom and international communism.'"<sup>8</sup> Cold War concerns about increased Soviet influence in the newly emerging independent African states impelled foundation and government support for African studies.

Before the Second World War few American colleges offered courses in African studies or African anthropology. A survey of 273 college and university catalogs in 1940–41 found only four courses on African ethnology and two courses on African language offered during that year.<sup>9</sup> By 1950 American colleges offered forty-six courses on African ethnol-



ogy but only five that focused exclusively on sub-Saharan Africa. By the late 1940s only five Americans besides Herskovits had published ethnographies based on African fieldwork. Of the five, three were Herskovits's students: William Bascom, Joseph Greenberg, and Jack Harris.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to the 1940s African studies was "promoted" primarily by individual scholars such as Herskovits, Du Bois, Woodson, and William Leo Hansberry of Howard University.<sup>11</sup> Although he may not have taught courses on Africa during the early twentieth century, as editor of the *Crisis* and in his own writings Du Bois helped disseminate information about Africa.<sup>12</sup> Like Herskovits, Du Bois was strongly influenced by Franz Boas in his study of Africa. Boas's talk to the 1906 Atlanta University graduating class was a revelation to Du Bois, who was a history instructor there. Du Bois later recalled Boas's speech: "You need not be ashamed of your African past; and then he recounted the history of black kingdoms south of the Sahara for a thousand years. I was too astonished to speak. All of this I had never heard and I came then and afterwards to realize how the silence and neglect of science can let truth utterly disappear or even be unconsciously distorted."<sup>13</sup> Nine years later, Du Bois published *The Negro*, an important work that devoted more than half of its contents to African history and culture.<sup>14</sup>

Woodson also promoted African studies through his own writing and by publishing numerous anthropological and historical articles in the *Journal of Negro History*. In addition, meetings of Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) provided a place for academics to present their research on Africa. In fact, Herskovits and his students presented papers at ASNLH meetings and published many articles in the *Journal of Negro History*. Furthermore, Woodson's *The African Background Outlined or Handbook for the Study of the Negro* (1936) provided teachers, students, and other readers a source for information about Africa, including sections on African and African American history.<sup>15</sup>

The lesser-known William Leo Hansberry pioneered in the teaching of African history in the United States at Howard University from 1922 to 1959. Hansberry started the African civilization section of the history department and taught the first classes in African history on ancient African civilizations in 1922. Within two years Hansberry had already taught eight hundred students in three different courses. Joseph E. Harris has described Hansberry's classes as "the vanguard of African studies" in the United States during the early 1920s. As Harris has pointed out,

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“The determination and commitment of this pioneering Africanist can be more fully appreciated by recalling that most of his research was conducted between 1916 and 1954, a 38-year period when African studies had virtually no academic status in the United States and little support among philanthropists. Consequently, Professor Hansberry had to rely primarily on his own funds to finance his research and to purchase audiovisual aids for his research and classes.”<sup>16</sup> Hansberry also received very little support from Howard University. Many professors at Howard questioned Hansberry’s credentials and objectivity. Political scientist Ralph Bunche maintained in 1943 “that Hansberry’s work is not highly regarded at Howard; first because he is thought not to be adequately equipped with scholarship [Hansberry had an M.A. from Harvard, but no Ph.D.]; and second, because he is chauvinistic in his teaching.” Kwame Alford has observed that the resentment of Hansberry stemmed in part from jealousy by prominent Howard professors over the large number of students signing up for Hansberry’s classes. In addition, philosopher Alain Locke and biologist Ernest E. Just “initiated an internal smear campaign” against Hansberry to ensure that Locke and not Hansberry would be sent by Howard to the 1924 opening of King Tut’s tomb in Luxor, Egypt.<sup>17</sup>

Several white scholars and institutions also did work related to Africa. Oric Bates, curator of African archaeology and ethnology at Harvard University’s Peabody Museum until his death in 1918, undertook research in Egypt, Nubia, and Libya and published *The Eastern Libyans: An Essay*. In addition, Bates was the first editor of Harvard’s African Studies Series, which began in 1917.<sup>18</sup> At Yale, Charles T. Loram conducted research on African education; the School of Advanced International Studies in Washington DC offered classes in African studies; and the Council of African Affairs disseminated information, mostly on South Africa. Other organizations interested in education and the dissemination of information on Africa were American Christian Missionary forces, American philanthropic agencies, the Department of State, the African Academy of Arts and Research, the American Council on African Education, and the Liberian Foundation.<sup>19</sup>

Herskovits led the way in developing the subfield of African anthropology and thereby helped move African studies into the mainstream of academia in the United States. Prior to the 1950s African studies, if present at all, was generally confined to the anthropology and geography

departments.<sup>20</sup> Since most historians defined history as the study of written documents and most African peoples had no written language, historians generally denied the existence of African history. Therefore African history became the province of anthropology, which studied nonliterate cultures.<sup>21</sup> During the 1930s Herskovits taught some of the few courses on Africa in America. His course “The Negro in Africa and America” was the first one on African anthropology offered at Northwestern University.<sup>22</sup> Under Herskovits’s leadership, Northwestern became the center of African anthropology in the United States. While most American anthropologists studied Native Americans, with the most common area of interest being the American Southwest, Herskovits’s focus on African studies and New World Negro work was a notable exception.<sup>23</sup> With his 1931 field trip to West Africa, Herskovits became “one of the first American anthropologists to do field work in Africa.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Herskovits taught “most of the next generation of Americans who worked in Africa.”<sup>25</sup> At the December 1946 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Herskovits chaired a symposium on Africa in which he and his students read four of the six papers delivered at the session.<sup>26</sup> Martin Staniland has observed that the 1930s saw the “first serious investigations of African societies by American scholars, notably William Bascom, Jack Harris [both students of Herskovits’s], Lorenzo D. Turner, and — above all — Melville J. Herskovits.”<sup>27</sup> As late as 1950 there were only between ten and twenty African specialists at American universities.<sup>28</sup> At Northwestern University, Herskovits had helped produce four of the country’s specialists on Africa. These were Harris, chief of the section of African research, Trusteeship Division, United Nations; Joseph Greenberg, assistant professor of anthropology and a specialist on African linguistics, Columbia University; Bascom, Northwestern anthropology professor; and Ralph Bunche, chief of the Trusteeship Division, United Nations. Greenberg and Bascom earned their Ph.D.s in anthropology at Northwestern; Harris earned his undergraduate degree at Northwestern; and Bunche did postdoctoral work at Northwestern.<sup>29</sup>

As an Africanist, Herskovits sought to center Africans as the subject of study. Until the 1920s missionaries, travelers, and historians of imperialism produced most of the writing on Africa. These writers depicted Africans as uncivilized peoples with no history. They maintained that any complex institutions in African society were the result of external influ-

ences from Europe or Asia.<sup>30</sup> Prominent white academics also purveyed a pejorative view of African cultures. In 1926 Yale professor Charles T. Loram asserted that “the coming [to Africa] of the white man with his higher civilization, his Christianity, his superior hygiene, and his better methods of cultivation and of manufacture, has been a blessing to the Native peoples.”<sup>31</sup> That same year Herskovits criticized missionary writings about Africa, which, due to their focus on conversion and “bringing to the heathen ‘the blessings’ of the Truth,” gave little attention to “what the natives think and do.”<sup>32</sup> By seeking to understand Africans through the study of their culture and history, Herskovits sought to reverse pejorative and stereotypical views of Africa. After becoming interested in African studies as a graduate student, Herskovits published a seminal article in 1930 that for the first time classified the various regions of Africa into distinct culture areas.<sup>33</sup> In his two-volume work on Dahomey, Herskovits argued that Dahomey had created its own complex political, cultural, and social institutions, with minimal European influence. In this way, Herskovits refuted those who assumed African inferiority and insisted that complex aspects of African culture must be the result of external influences.<sup>34</sup> Unlike earlier writers who evaluated African cultures in comparison to Western culture, Herskovits sought to understand Africa on its own terms. By approaching African cultures in this way, Herskovits helped steer writers away from a Eurocentric cultural hierarchy and toward an objective study of world cultures.

During the 1940s Herskovits sought to capitalize on increased government and foundation interest in area studies programs generated by America’s involvement in World War II and its emergence as a global power. The government’s demand for knowledge and experts led foundations and social scientists to mobilize to meet the government’s wartime needs for foreign area experts to train officials for overseas service and to provide information on strategic foreign areas.<sup>35</sup> The government especially sought out anthropologists because they had substantially more experience in Asia, Africa, and Latin America than did other social scientists.<sup>36</sup> By the second year of the war, a majority of anthropologists were involved at least part-time in government service.<sup>37</sup> Anthropologists worked for many government agencies, including the Department of State, the Office of Strategic Services, the Board of Economic Warfare, and the War Relocation Authority. Ruth Benedict and several other an-

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thropologists conducted studies of “Rumanian, Thai, and Japanese national character, and investigations of the effects of strategic bombing on Japanese morale” to help American occupation officials understand the populations with whom they would be dealing. Other anthropologists served in language-training schools or other training programs for military occupation personnel. During the war the newly formed Society for Applied Anthropology published a journal, *Applied Anthropology*, devoted to employing anthropology to help solve practical problems related to wartime questions of dealing with occupied peoples.<sup>38</sup>

The Second World War transformed the relationship between the federal government and social scientists. The increased demand for anthropologists to train individuals for a wide range of practical work meant that as the discipline expanded, it moved away from detached scholarship. Many social scientists eschewed their prewar rejection of government service. Top social scientists had previously “regarded cooperation with the government’s military and intelligence agencies as disreputable, and even as hostile to science per se.” For instance, during World War I Franz Boas had written a letter to the *Nation* attacking anthropologists’ “undercover work for U.S. military intelligence agencies.”<sup>39</sup> But during the 1940s social scientists’ attitudes changed as they sought to help the war effort and aid victims of the Holocaust through government service.

Herskovits’s experiences and change of attitude toward government service during the Second World War paralleled those of other social scientists. In 1942, for the first time, Herskovits went to work for the government. He “helped to organize a school for Civil Affairs officers for the War Department.”<sup>40</sup> Civil Affairs training schools were created at several universities, including Northwestern, to offer short-term courses to teach occupation and intelligence officers the language, history, culture, and geography of the countries where they would be posted.<sup>41</sup> In addition to his regular teaching duties and those with the Civil Affairs training school, Herskovits was “drafted” to work for the Board of Economic Warfare (BEW) as “head consultant,” and during most of 1943 he spent every other week in Washington DC.<sup>42</sup> The BEW, headed by Vice President Henry Wallace, procured war materials such as rubber and quinine from Latin America. Herskovits’s extensive fieldwork experience in Brazil and Suriname made him an apt choice to work for the BEW,

which sought to improve social conditions in Latin America in order to improve workers' efficiency in the production of war materials.<sup>43</sup>

Herskovits's wartime correspondence provides no evidence that he viewed his government service as inappropriate in any way. He viewed the war as, at least in part, a battle against racism, a battle he had fought all his life. In the classroom he challenged student assumptions about race in America. Arkansas native Parma Basham, a Northwestern student during the 1930s, remembered Herskovits as a "brilliant lecturer" who "attracted students in large numbers" and transformed students' notions about race. Basham credited Herskovits's influence with making "it possible for me to become an activist 'white liberal' in the Little Rock school crisis of 1957-58."<sup>44</sup> In 1944 Herskovits invited black poet and journalist Frank Marshall Davis to speak to his students about race relations. He told Davis that most of Northwestern's students were well-to-do and had no idea how "racism ever directly touches their lives. I want you to shake them up." Apparently, Davis did just that. He later recalled how the students became "red-faced" and "squirmed uncomfortably in their seats" as he explained how white realtors used racist practices such as restrictive covenants to create a housing shortage and artificially drive up rents for black tenants. Following the talk, Herskovits invited Davis to return annually because the students needed a dose of reality about race in America.<sup>45</sup>

Even before America's entrance into the war, Herskovits supported the struggle of Jewish teachers and scholars to flee German-occupied territory to avoid being sent to Nazi concentration camps. During the 1930s and 1940s Herskovits helped Jewish refugees come to the United States by arranging assistance from others, raising money, or trying to locate American jobs to facilitate their immigration.<sup>46</sup> He also offered to distribute anti-Nazi pamphlets to refute Nazi propaganda in the United States.<sup>47</sup> In 1933 Herskovits donated money to help fund "fellowships for German Jewish scholars to be brought to this country."<sup>48</sup> During the late 1930s he raised money and helped to make arrangements with American and foreign diplomats to save several German and Austrian Jewish scholars and teachers from the concentration camps.<sup>49</sup> In November 1938 Herskovits helped sponsor a meeting organized by the National Conference of Christians and Jews to "protest the atrocities and inhuman treatment of minorities in Fascist Germany and also to devise ways and means to alleviate the suffering of these people."<sup>50</sup> Thus Hers-

kovits's wartime service and the issues raised by the war contributed to his overt rejection of a strictly construed detachment from policy questions.

While the wartime government employed social scientists with international expertise, the learned societies and foundations promoted area studies programs to meet the demand for specialists. They did so because they believed that in the postwar world, the United States would take on a greater international peacekeeping role.<sup>51</sup> The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and the National Research Council (NRC) formed area studies committees during the war and then "joined with the Smithsonian Institution in establishing the Ethnogeographic Board as a focal center of their interests."<sup>52</sup> The Ethnogeographic Board, primarily financed by the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, furnished information to the federal government about remote foreign areas of strategic importance to the war effort.<sup>53</sup> In June 1943 the SSRC issued a report entitled "World Regions in the Social Sciences" that advocated increased research, graduate and undergraduate instruction, and centers of area studies so that the United States could meet its "postwar role as a member of the United Nations." The report did not clearly define this role. The area study centers should be set up in those places with the best resources in personnel, funding sources, and geographic and historic connections.<sup>54</sup> Herskovits received a copy of the report and forwarded copies to a Northwestern committee that was considering postwar planning.<sup>55</sup> As a longtime advocate of area studies, Herskovits welcomed the SSRC's support.<sup>56</sup>

As chair of the Committee on African Anthropology of the NRC during the war, Herskovits supported efforts to expand scholarly work on Africa.<sup>57</sup> Particularly at the beginning of America's involvement in the war, Africa took on strategic importance as American and British armies invaded North Africa in Operation Torch in 1942. After the American entrance into the war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt decided that liberating Northwest Africa — controlled by the pro-Nazi French government headquartered at Vichy — represented the best opportunity for a quick victory with the least risk, a result that the president hoped would boost American morale.<sup>58</sup> While the war brought increased interest in area studies, Africa — reflecting its long-time deprecation — did not get as much attention as

other regions. Of the three learned societies, the NRC, SSRC, and ACLS, only the NRC formed a committee on African studies.<sup>59</sup> Although he knew that committee meetings in late 1942 and early 1943 were designed to provide technical assistance to the war effort, Herskovits saw the meetings' importance in terms of advancing the scholarly work of Africanists in the United States. He was pleased that "by bringing together the American Africanists, the [National Research] Council has provided a focal point for the stimulation of work in the field of African anthropology that has up to the present been lacking."<sup>60</sup>

Despite his general advocacy for the expansion of African studies, Herskovits's belief in the primacy of Northwestern's program led him to resist efforts by other universities to form African studies programs. Herskovits maintained that Northwestern, with fifteen years of experience in undertaking research and offering classes in African anthropology, was the obvious place to establish an African studies program. He saw other universities as competition for limited resources. Consequently, Herskovits insisted that during the war, funding should only go to assist "institutions that can help people prepare themselves for furthering the war effort in that continent," telling the General Education Board (GEB) of the Rockefeller Foundation that opportunities to fund Africanist research should wait until after the war.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, the Rockefeller Foundation and its GEB provided grants for African studies programs at Fisk University and the University of Pennsylvania. Both universities submitted funding proposals in 1942, "invoking national interest and 'objective' research as justifications for funding."<sup>62</sup> The University of Pennsylvania, which had formed "an African collection [Heinrich Wieschhoff was the curator] in its University Museum before the war," sought to build on the Army Specialized Training Program on North Africa, which the U.S. Army conducted during 1941-42. The Rockefeller Foundation gave the university \$3,000 each year from 1943 to 1945.<sup>63</sup>

Fisk University sociologist Charles S. Johnson, chair of the Department of Social Sciences, proposed the formation of an African studies program at the Tennessee college.<sup>64</sup> Fisk's experience in African studies over the previous ten years helped persuade the GEB to provide support.<sup>65</sup> For eight years Fisk anthropologists Mark H. Watkins and Lorenzo Turner had undertaken research in African linguistics.<sup>66</sup> For ten years Fisk professors, including sociologist Robert Park, had offered a seminar on



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race and culture. Moreover, Fisk was “the only Negro institution, in which courses in African cultures and languages have been systematically developed,” including an ongoing three-year study of the “grammar of the Vai [a West African] language.” Johnson’s personal relationship with Jackson Davis of the GEB also worked to Fisk’s advantage.<sup>67</sup>

Prior to making any decision about the proposed programs at Fisk and Pennsylvania, the GEB sought Herskovits’s advice. Herskovits expressed reservations about both programs. Although he supported Pennsylvania’s funding request, Herskovits criticized Wieschhoff because he had “little insight into human values.” Herskovits asserted that Wieschhoff failed to give his students an understanding of “the relationship between culture and behavior that we in this country are stressing these days” or an understanding of “the human situations which Americans going to Africa would have to meet in their work there.”<sup>68</sup> Earlier, Frances Herskovits had met with the GEB in her husband’s absence (he was working as chief consultant to the Board of Economic Warfare in Washington DC), and she criticized Wieschhoff because “his German methods of analysis are statistical and limited in value.”<sup>69</sup>

Herskovits was even more critical of the Fisk proposal. He argued that “much of the work proposed would be duplicating studies already made, since grammars and dictionaries that are quite adequate for any emergency program already exist for many of the languages named.” While he had earlier supported the work of Fisk anthropologists Watkins and Turner, he now criticized their credentials.<sup>70</sup> Although Watkins was “well trained,” Herskovits asserted that he had no field experience and had published only one book, based on his doctoral research at the University of Chicago. Moreover, Herskovits was “doubtful whether Watkins could teach people to speak African languages as preparation for practical work in Africa.”<sup>71</sup> While he valued Turner’s linguistic research among blacks, known as the Gullah, in the Sea Islands of South Carolina, which had revealed extensive evidence of African linguistic survivals, Herskovits questioned Turner’s ability to teach foreign languages. According to Herskovits, “Like many phoneticians, . . . [Turner] does not learn languages very well; for example, in Brazil almost everyone who mentioned what a sincere and attractive individual he was, also commented on how poor his Portuguese was.”<sup>72</sup> Consequently, Herskovits recommended that the GEB reject the Fisk proposal. He did not believe that Fisk could “advantageously carry on a program in the Africa-

nist field as ambitious as the one outlined in this proposal.” Instead, Herskovits suggested that the GEB continue to extend “modest support” for Turner’s and Watkins’s linguistic studies.<sup>73</sup>

Although the GEB agreed with some of Herskovits’s criticisms on specific shortcomings at Fisk, they still believed that Fisk’s proposal for general work in African studies was warranted.<sup>74</sup> An attempt was made to address Herskovits’s concerns in a meeting with Charles Johnson, Herskovits, and Jackson Davis of the GEB. Herskovits did not mention any specific criticisms at the meeting, but he did indicate his willingness to advise Thomas E. Jones, white president of Fisk, on the program. Johnson later told Davis that although he anticipated “differences of opinion,” he would be happy to have Herskovits “serve as a consultant.”<sup>75</sup>

In any event, the GEB funded the Fisk program, but in a way that indicates that Herskovits’s criticisms may have had some impact. The funding of \$10,000 was primarily used to hire Edwin Smith, a South African-born missionary and British-trained anthropologist, as program director and visiting professor for the 1943–44 academic year. By doing so, the GEB rejected Charles S. Johnson’s recommendation that foundation funding be used primarily for “Fellowships for African informants.” The GEB justified the decision to hire Smith based on his experience in African studies and his status as “a former president of the Royal Anthropological Society.”<sup>76</sup> This hiring may indicate that the GEB did not feel confident enough in Fisk’s personnel to fund the program without bringing in an outsider. Herskovits, however, was not pleased with Smith’s hiring due to Smith’s missionary background and connection with imperialism as a British national.<sup>77</sup>

Despite Herskovits’s criticisms of the Fisk program, he did participate by delivering papers there. In November 1944 Herskovits gave talks entitled “Africa as a Unit and as a Classification,” “The Culture-Areas of Africa,” “The Underlying Similarities in African Culture,” and “Africa and the Old World.”<sup>78</sup>

Although the Fisk program showed early vigor — by the second year of operation, the program had five professors, with Lorenzo Turner acting as department head — by 1948 the program declined and was disbanded.<sup>79</sup> By 1947 Watkins was in Guatemala on a field trip and Turner had left Fisk for Roosevelt College in Chicago.<sup>80</sup>

Pennsylvania’s program met a similar fate. By 1948 it had expired due to loss of personnel and changing academic direction.<sup>81</sup> The big blow

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was program director Wieschhoff's decision to leave the school for an appointment with the United Nations.<sup>82</sup>

Although area studies had been given a boost by the wartime demand for international experts, Africa's importance in American foreign policy and with the foundations temporarily declined when the Allies ceased operations in North Africa in 1943. Africa again took a backseat to other foreign regions. The decline in foundation interest is demonstrated by the demise of the African studies programs at Fisk and Pennsylvania and the terminations of the African committee of the NRC and the Ethnogeographic Board, which were inactive by November 1944.<sup>83</sup> Limited government interest in Africa is shown by the fact that only .15 percent of American foreign aid went to African territories from 1945 to 1955. Commercial interests in Africa also remained small. In 1960 only 4 percent of American exports went to Africa, the same as in 1930.<sup>84</sup>

This momentary decline in interest in Africa also doomed Herskovits's plans to hold an international conference on Africa to facilitate the further development of African studies.<sup>85</sup> As chair of the NRC Committee on African Anthropology, Herskovits convened a meeting in March 1943 to consider the formation of an African Institute, an African Office of Information, and a conference on current African problems. Edwin Embree of the Rosenwald Foundation, W. E. B. Du Bois, Anson Phelps Stokes, and Ralph Bunche attended the meeting, which was financed by the Rosenwald Fund and the Phelps-Stokes Fund.<sup>86</sup> At the April 1943 meeting Herskovits was elected acting chair; Du Bois, vice chair; Embree, treasurer; and Bunche, secretary.<sup>87</sup> Despite an extensive search, the group failed to find someone willing to serve as permanent chair. Among those who turned down the position were Colonel Allan McBride of the U.S. Army General Staff, Stokes, Vice President Henry Wallace, and Lloyd Garrison, dean of the University of Wisconsin law school.<sup>88</sup> In April 1945 Herskovits notified the committee members that because of limited American interest in Africa, no independent African Institute or branch of the International African Institute (IAI) of London could be organized. The Africa conference committee ceased operations.<sup>89</sup>

The postwar development of area studies programs occurred in two stages. The first occurred in the decade after the war, and a second and much larger expansion occurred from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. At the end of the war, a consensus emerged among the major foundations, the learned societies, and the federal government that in order to

forestall another worldwide conflict, American isolationism must be rejected and replaced with internationalist policies.<sup>90</sup> The foundations' support for area studies was precipitated by their recognition of the United States's global responsibilities, including those of strengthening non-Communist countries in the context of the emerging Cold War.<sup>91</sup> During the immediate postwar period the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation provided most of the funding for area studies programs, which were established at major universities. Increasing antagonism between the Soviet Union and the United States and the Ford Foundation's decision to make an enormous commitment to area studies programs during the mid-1950s defined the second postwar stage in the development of area studies.<sup>92</sup>

By the end of the war two complementary trends had convinced the Carnegie Corporation to become a strong supporter of interdisciplinary area studies programs and a potential source of funding for Herskovits's African studies program. As early as the 1930s the Carnegie Corporation supported interdisciplinary social science research. In 1938 Charles Dollard persuaded Carnegie president Frederick Keppel to establish interdisciplinary postdoctoral fellowships to train scholars of one discipline in a second subject.<sup>93</sup> Then, as a result of the Carnegie Corporation's postwar study that reevaluated its entire program — in which important individuals in government, business, and journalism were consulted — the corporation decided to promote the training of interdisciplinary area studies specialists. This decision was influenced by the wartime focus of the Ethnogeographic Board, which furnished information to the federal government about remote foreign areas of strategic importance to the war effort. Since government agencies generally followed an area approach, the board decided to do the same rather than using a disciplinary approach, which would promote programs in a single discipline like Russian history or Japanese sociology. For the Carnegie Corporation, the interests in interdisciplinary social science and area studies fit nicely, as both would advance interdisciplinary research into human behavior.<sup>94</sup>

Herskovits sought to capitalize on this postwar rise in interest in area studies among the research councils, the government, the foundations, and the media. His experience and status in the field and his connections with numerous foundation officials placed him in an excellent position to make his case for an African studies program at Northwestern. In 1946 Herskovits began to lobby the foundations in earnest for such a pro-

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gram. When John W. Gardner of the Carnegie Corporation told Herskovits of the foundation's interest in area studies in early December 1946 and of his plan to visit several midwestern universities, Herskovits invited Gardner to Northwestern.<sup>95</sup> At first Gardner was not particularly impressed with African studies at Northwestern, noting that although there were three professors, there was "nothing resembling a program in African studies."<sup>96</sup> In 1947, at a conference financed by the Carnegie Corporation and convened by the SSRC Committee on World Area Research at Columbia University, Herskovits protested the omission of a panel on Africa. While Herskovits admitted that the dearth of Africanists made it "impossible to get together enough people to have such a discussion," he argued that the SSRC committee should support the African field in the future to remedy the problem.<sup>97</sup>

After hearing from a third party that the University of Pennsylvania was negotiating with the Carnegie Corporation to fund their African studies program, Herskovits lobbied the Carnegie Corporation, the GEB, and the NRC to consider "Northwestern University as a center for African studies." Herskovits told the Carnegie Corporation and the GEB that, based on its two decades of success in training African specialists in anthropology, Northwestern was better prepared and had a better claim to funding for African studies than did Pennsylvania.<sup>98</sup> Herskovits implored anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell of the NRC to reverse the decision "that further action [supporting African studies] 'should probably await the development of a strong institute of African studies at some university.'" Herskovits insisted that an African studies program already existed at Northwestern "except in name . . . and I feel the fact should be made clear to all interested in development of the Africanist field." He also asserted that Northwestern's exemplary record of student training, its success in winning awards and grants, and its focus on anthropology, which was the key to African studies, made Northwestern the prime candidate for foundation support for an extensive program.<sup>99</sup>

In lieu of direct foundation support for the African studies program, in the spring of 1947 Herskovits found other avenues for funding research in Africa. Noting the "difficulty of obtaining support for any consistent program of scientific African studies," Herskovits recommended that the IAI of London amend "its research program so as to permit grants for field-work and publication to be made to students who have trained in American universities."<sup>100</sup> Founded in 1926 and funded by the Rocke-

efeller Foundation, the IAI was the first institute on Africa that was largely controlled by academics and not colonial officials or missionaries.<sup>101</sup> Herskovits made three recommendations to the IAI for the development of African studies programs. He proposed research into “aspects of African life that have tended to be neglected under the pressure of practical problems,” including “[s]tudies of New World Communities [that] have revealed how tenacious are these phases of African life, and how far-reaching their implications.” He also wanted studies on different ethnic groups “without regard to the political boundaries established by the Colonial Powers, which too often disregard ethnic lines.” Finally, he asked the IAI to support his recommendation that the Fulbright research fellowships, established by the U.S. Congress in 1946, be used to fund work in the colonies of European powers and not just in the countries themselves.<sup>102</sup> In May 1948, in his capacity as chair of the NRC Committee on African Anthropology, Herskovits successfully lobbied the Department of State to accept his position that Fulbright fellowships fund research in the colonies of Belgium, France, and Britain. The IAI also gave its support.<sup>103</sup> Concurrently, Herskovits was added to the executive council of the institute.<sup>104</sup>

In July 1947 Herskovits again requested Carnegie Corporation support for developing an African area studies program.<sup>105</sup> Gardner advised Herskovits that the foundation was not yet ready to act on African studies, but he left open the possibility of working with Herskovits. Moreover, Gardner informed Herskovits that the negotiations with the University of Pennsylvania had been terminated.<sup>106</sup> Officials there had decided to limit their program to North Africa, leaving sub-Saharan Africa open to Northwestern.<sup>107</sup>

Despite Gardner’s mixed message, Herskovits perceived an opportunity to pursue his related interests in African American and African studies. As we have seen, these interests were fundamentally intertwined in Herskovits’s mind. Since his 1926 proposal to the foundations for a broad-based inquiry into the cultures of peoples of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic, Herskovits had sought opportunities to expand research and teaching in these areas.

During the war Herskovits, influenced by the increasing political interest in Africa, began to shift his rationale for African studies. At first he argued that African studies would illuminate African American cultures. Thus in 1942 Herskovits informally floated an idea for research in Africa,

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asserting that Africanist research would “help us analyze both the scientific and practical problems arising out of Negro-White contacts in this country and elsewhere in the New World.”<sup>108</sup> In 1944 Herskovits proposed the creation of a joint committee of the research councils on African American and African studies due to their close connection.<sup>109</sup> The SSRC and the NRC, however, turned down the idea for a joint committee, as the focus during the war was on area studies, and thus a committee based on a connection between Africans and Americans of African descent generated little interest.<sup>110</sup>

By the end of the war Herskovits had shifted his focus. He now argued that African American cultural research would illuminate African cultures. In 1946 he read a paper at a symposium on Africa sponsored by the NRC Committee on African Anthropology in which he maintained “that an understanding of New World Negro cultures will reciprocally deepen our understanding of the relevant African cultures themselves, give unity to a broader field of research, and open the door for an interchange that cannot but be fruitful for Africanists and Afroamericanists alike.”<sup>111</sup> Moreover, Herskovits claimed that because of the historical connection between peoples of African descent on both sides of the Atlantic, research in both fields represented no “more than work on different parts of but a single field of study.”<sup>112</sup> He pointed out that a number of concepts learned from research in African American cultures also illuminated African cultural research. For instance, research in New World Negro studies demonstrated the tenacity of African cultures. Understanding this tenacity in the New World would help researchers comprehend the ability of African culture to withstand the European influence during the colonial era.<sup>113</sup>

In late 1947, with the approval of Northwestern president Franklyn Snyder, Herskovits formulated his plans for development of both African and African American studies.<sup>114</sup> Herskovits planned to apply to the foundations for about \$100,000 over five years to train history, political science, education, and geography faculty; invite African and African American specialists to Northwestern; increase library resources; finance fellowships and fieldwork; and add an African languages specialist. Under Herskovits’s plan, no degrees would be offered in the two subfields; degrees would still be granted by the traditional disciplines. The anthropology department would continue to be the focus of African and Afri-

can American studies, but other departments would add specialties in these areas.<sup>115</sup>

Neither the Carnegie Corporation nor the Northwestern administration was persuaded by Herskovits's plan to combine African and African American studies into one program. While the emergence of the United States as a global power had heightened interest in areas outside the United States, there was no corresponding increase in interest by the foundations in African American studies. During the postwar era the foundations evinced little enthusiasm for studies of African American culture. This was due in part to the influence of the Carnegie-Myrdal study. *An American Dilemma* concluded that America's race problem was a moral problem for whites, and this interpretation led to studies of "prejudice and educational solutions." As a result, community studies or cultural studies of African Americans were rare during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>116</sup>

The Carnegie Corporation encouraged Herskovits to pursue an informal African studies program focused on increasing field research by students and faculty but told him to exclude the Americas from the proposal.<sup>117</sup> This was a key turning point for Herskovits. Africa would now be at the center of his career, with African American studies relegated to a subordinate position. For the second time, the foundations' response to political developments had influenced the direction of Herskovits's work. Nonetheless, Herskovits continued to press the foundations to sponsor African American studies. In 1950 he requested Ford Foundation support for a combined African and African American studies program, but it, too, was rejected. Similarly, Ford turned down his 1956 request for support of extensive acculturation research among African Americans in the West Indies, South America, and the United States.<sup>118</sup>

In any event, Herskovits accepted the Carnegie Corporation's recommendations and submitted a request for \$25,000 over five years to finance field research, student training, and library resources in African studies. In support of his proposal, Herskovits noted that because the war had limited his field research program to the Americas, he would soon have "a number of people with field training in the study of Negro cultures, ripe for work in Africa itself."<sup>119</sup>

In October 1948 the Carnegie Corporation approved three years of funding at \$10,000 per year to support Northwestern's African research program.<sup>120</sup> After the grant was made public in December 1948, Hersko-



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vits delineated the objectives of the program. First, the program would focus on all elements of African culture, with an emphasis on cultural change due to external influences. Second, the program would concentrate on training researchers in African studies. Toward that end, Northwestern would hold multidisciplinary seminars with international scholars of African studies.<sup>121</sup> Herskovits expected that by the end of the three-year grant, the program would have trained students for African work, created African courses in several departments at Northwestern, and improved the library's Africa collections.<sup>122</sup>

With the Carnegie funding, Herskovits established what is generally regarded as the first major interdisciplinary African studies program in the United States.<sup>123</sup> During the next fifteen years Herskovits spent most of his energies on the development and expansion of the African studies program at Northwestern University.<sup>124</sup> Sally Falk Moore has observed that during these years, Herskovits's "major influence was . . . through his indefatigable lecturing, publishing, and teaching about Africa and the African diaspora and through his considerable organizational skill in building at Northwestern University 'the leading center of African Studies in the U.S.'"<sup>125</sup> To a large extent, he now left behind his prewar program of charting the influence of African culture in the Americas. A combination of the exigencies of the Second World War and the Cold War, the influence of the government and the philanthropies, and his long-standing interest in Africa moved Herskovits toward this concentration on African studies as Africa assumed strategic importance to American foreign policy.

Herskovits proceeded to enact his vision of the African studies program at Northwestern. In January 1949 he inaugurated a weekly interdisciplinary faculty seminar on Africa.<sup>126</sup> Participants during the initial quarter included mostly academics but also a British colonial attaché and a missionary. Lecture subjects included native peoples, economics, politics, linguistics, demographics, public health, colonial policy, missionary activity, and education. Northwestern's African collection in its Deering Library was expanded with the help of the University of Pennsylvania, which decided to turn over its sub-Saharan Africa collections to Northwestern following its decision to concentrate on North Africa. About \$15,000 of the Carnegie money was used to award fellowships and scholarships for student fieldwork in Africa.<sup>127</sup>

Herskovits continued to press for and receive increased support for

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African studies from the Carnegie Corporation and other agencies. To supplement the Carnegie grant, Herskovits obtained grants from the SSRC and the Rockefeller Foundation to fund student training and research.<sup>128</sup> In November 1950 the Carnegie Corporation provided \$10,000 for the 1951 Summer Institute on Contemporary Africa at Northwestern (held under Herskovits's direction).<sup>129</sup>

In August 1951 Northwestern submitted a grant request to the Carnegie Corporation for \$33,000 per year for five years for the African studies program, which now included political science, history, economics, geography, sociology, and anthropology.<sup>130</sup> Underscoring the need for more funds to train Africanists, Herskovits had reported in December 1950 that in the United States there were only two historians, one economist, one political scientist, no sociologist or social psychologist, two geographers, and about a dozen anthropologists primarily concerned with Africa.<sup>131</sup> Convinced by the need for more trained Africanists, the Carnegie Corporation approved a grant of \$20,000 per year over five years for Northwestern to form an African Study Center and expand its African studies program.<sup>132</sup> The African Study Center would "carry on and encourage African research, maintain a library of Africana, train personnel, disseminate information concerning the continent, act as a clearing house of African information, and help coordinate research activities in the field." Herskovits was named director of the center and chair of the interdisciplinary Committee on African Studies that would create the center. Under the new grant, the interdisciplinary African seminar would continue to be held each summer, an undergraduate major in African studies would be established, and Ph.D.s in the African field of particular majors would become available.<sup>133</sup>

Meanwhile, despite their strong support for Northwestern's African studies program, some Carnegie Corporation officials objected to Herskovits's continued leadership. Charles Dollard, now Carnegie Corporation president, told Payson Wild, Northwestern vice president and dean of faculties, "we did not see Herskovits as the key man in a large scale program of African studies but had great respect for him as a teacher." Similarly, John Gardner reported that the "officers of CC [Carnegie Corporation] have distinct reservations concerning Herskovits' leadership." Furthermore, the corporation "got the impression that Wild's opinion of Herskovits was not very different from our own."<sup>134</sup> While Dollard did not indicate the nature of his objection to Herskovits, he probably found

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Herskovits difficult to work with. Dollard's opinion of Herskovits was most likely formed during their involvement with the Carnegie Study of the Negro when Myrdal and Herskovits had clashed over substantive and administrative issues, with Dollard generally siding with Myrdal.<sup>135</sup>

The Northwestern administration assuaged Dollard's objections to Herskovits's continued leadership of the African studies program by setting up a "strong inter-departmental committee . . . to provide top-level guidance for Herskovits."<sup>136</sup> After Herskovits agreed to the creation of the oversight committee, the Carnegie Corporation agreed to continue their support with Herskovits as head of the program.<sup>137</sup>

Although the record indicates no further mention of replacing Herskovits, officials at the Carnegie Corporation continued to express mixed feelings about him. In April 1954 a Carnegie official reported on a meeting with Herskovits: "As a result of the egocentrism which is such a dominant theme of a conversation with MH [Herskovits], one comes away after a visit at Northwestern very much impressed with this being a one man show." Although this official believed that Herskovits had great influence on the program, he maintained that anthropologist William Bascom and political scientist Roland Young, among others, played important roles in the program's success. The report concluded that there is "little doubt that MH is doing a good job."<sup>138</sup>

In 1951 Northwestern's African studies program was not only the best in the nation, but it was the only one providing any training for graduate students. Although there was evidence of incipient programs at several institutions, including the University of Chicago, Roosevelt College, and the Council on Foreign Relations, little actual graduate-level training was being accomplished.<sup>139</sup> An SSRC report on area studies at American universities indicated that there were only thirteen graduate students in African studies, all at Northwestern.<sup>140</sup> The report concluded that the nation "was seriously handicapped in its international relations because of a lack of specialists trained in the geography, language, customs and social structure of the eight major geographical areas."<sup>141</sup>

Herskovits capitalized on the emergence of the Ford Foundation as the major player in area studies in the context of increasing Cold War tensions to make great advances in the African studies program at Northwestern. During the late 1940s the Ford Foundation formulated an ambitious plan to promote area studies, including African studies. Established during the late 1930s, the Ford Foundation remained an in-house

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charity of Ford Motor Company that supported local Detroit institutions through the mid-1940s. During the late 1940s, however, the Ford Foundation established itself as a major funding agency for national and international projects.<sup>142</sup> This development stemmed from the recommendations in 1949 of a Ford Foundation committee headed by H. Rowan Gaither Jr., chair of the Rand Corporation, a contract research organization. This committee established the foundation's five program areas: peace, democracy, economics, education, and human behavior. Moreover, the Gaither report emphasized international projects in each area.<sup>143</sup>

The Carnegie Corporation sought to increase the impact of its own programs by persuading other institutions, notably Ford, to expand their initiatives. In this connection, Gaither was given access to Carnegie Corporation planning memoranda. In addition, Carnegie's John Gardner advised the Ford Foundation on area studies programs and introduced Ford's officials to prominent figures in the field, like Herskovits.<sup>144</sup> These developments led the Ford Foundation to substantially expand its aid to area studies.<sup>145</sup>

Calculations based on the Cold War also played an important part in the Ford Foundation's decision to support area studies in general and African studies in particular. In 1954 Gaither, now president of the Ford Foundation, explicitly made the connections between the Cold War and area studies. "Any program directed toward human welfare in this period of history must be concerned with the increased involvement of our country in world affairs, with our new responsibilities for international leadership, and, above all, with the deadly threat to any hope of human progress posed by wars and communism," asserted the Ford Foundation president.<sup>146</sup> During the 1950s American policymakers focused increased attention on Africa in the context of the unfolding independence movement on the continent. Many politicians believed that the Soviet Union would attempt to extend its influence in Africa by supporting Communist insurgents who would try to topple colonial regimes.<sup>147</sup> In 1955 Chester Bowles, an aide to then-senator John F. Kennedy, "supported a call for new African studies programs by pointing out that the Soviet Union had recently set up 'a major center' in Tashkent."<sup>148</sup> By the mid-1950s the Eisenhower administration and the foundations considered Africa an important Cold War battleground.<sup>149</sup> In this connection,

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Vice President Nixon asserted that Africa “could well prove to be the decisive factor” in the Cold War struggle.<sup>150</sup>

Herskovits, in close contact with John Gardner of the Carnegie Corporation and aware of the emergence of the Ford Foundation as the key foundation for area studies programs, now began to lobby Ford for more substantial funding.<sup>151</sup> In May 1950 Herskovits, backed by Northwestern’s administration, submitted a five-year \$187,500 funding proposal to the Ford Foundation for a Program of Research and Training in African and African American Studies. Herskovits asserted that this program would serve as a “historical laboratory for testing assumptions concerning the results of contacts between peoples of differing traditional backgrounds,” determining how cultures change as a result of interaction. Herskovits also maintained that the increased global importance of Africa in terms of “natural resources and man-power potential” demanded such a program to provide policymakers with the essential information to make more informed decisions. The training and employment of more African specialists would increase the effectiveness of programs of economic development. These specialists would foster greater understanding of indigenous cultures and more effective ways of working with them. Specifically, the funding would cover field research, seminars, lectureships, fellowships, publication subsidies, library purchases, and other expenses.<sup>152</sup> Herskovits’s funding request, however, was premature. Ford had not yet decided to include Africa in its programs.<sup>153</sup>

Although Ford took no immediate action on this request, Herskovits’s 1952 recommendation that the Ford Foundation Board on Overseas Training and Research start to include sub-Saharan Africa in its programs helped induce Ford to support the training of Africanists. Toward that end, the Ford Foundation created the Foreign Area Fellowship Program, and in 1954 Ford began to include Africa in the program.<sup>154</sup> From 1952 to 1955 the Ford Foundation provided three hundred fellowships for study and research in Africa, Asia, the Near East, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe.<sup>155</sup>

Herskovits’s importuning of Ford led to the foundation’s decision to enlist him in 1952 “as Consultant for the Foundation” to convene a conference on Africa that would consider “the needs and activities by private American voluntary agencies.”<sup>156</sup> Herskovits invited fourteen people, mostly scholars, but also three United Nations officials and two

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State Department officials. Of the scholars, three were former students of Herskovits's. Rayford Logan, representing Howard University, was the only African American invited. Six guests were invited, including representatives of the British and French embassies and the Belgian Office of Information; a representative of University College of Ibadan in Nigeria; Julius G. Kiano, a Kenyan student who had just graduated from Antioch College; and a representative of the South African Native College in Fort Hare, South Africa.<sup>157</sup>

Claude Barnett of the Associated Negro Press criticized the limited black presence at the conference. Barnett characterized the presence of only one African American (Logan) at the conference as representative of the tokenism that was practiced all too often by the foundations. Moreover, Barnett questioned the absence of Ralph Bunche and the lack of representation for Lincoln University, a black college that had formed an Institute of African Studies in 1950.<sup>158</sup> Herskovits — who had decided whom to invite — told the Ford Foundation that Barnett should be advised that four Africans were present and that since the purpose of the conference was only exploration and not planning “a definite program,” the necessary representatives were there.<sup>159</sup>

Former Herskovits student Jack Harris reported that Ralph Bunche “was curious and perhaps a little hurt that you had not invited him to or informed him of the conference.” Bunche suspected that he was not invited “because he was a member of the Board of the [Ford] Foundation and that you [Herskovits] automatically eliminated him as a participant.”<sup>160</sup> There is no record of Herskovits's response.

Herskovits prepared the conference report, which made three recommendations to the Ford Foundation. First, it recommended the funding of training and research programs for American Africanists. In this area, the report favored strengthening “centers of African research and teaching,” including augmenting library collections and fellowship programs, and funding a journal of African studies. Under the proposal, major funding would be given to Northwestern's program and a program at an unnamed East Coast university. Lesser funding would be provided to other university programs. Second, the report proposed exchange programs between Africa and the United States to give Americans “a new perspective on the potentialities of Africa and her peoples.” Toward that end, the conference recommended support for “pre- and post-doctoral field research and training grants for Americans,” funding for African

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students to undertake undergraduate and graduate study in the United States, funding for “mature Africans and other residents of Africa for observation and training in the United States,” and funding of teacher exchanges between Africa and the United States. Finally, the conference recommended financing field projects to increase international goodwill and reduce internal tensions in Africa. These would include “pilot projects for community development” to alleviate poverty, disease, and illiteracy. Africans would actively participate in every facet, including policymaking.<sup>161</sup>

Herskovits’s report to the Ford Foundation indicated that there were “no disagreements to record” on the final report. For the most part, Rayford Logan’s letter to Herskovits seems to bear this out. Logan told Herskovits, “You did an excellent job of editing the report for the Ford Foundation. We are all greatly in your debt. I feel confident that the desired results will be obtained.” Logan did make a few suggested changes, many of which Herskovits accepted. Herskovits, however, rejected Logan’s request “to step up the amount proposed for the ‘other universities’ from \$20,000 to \$30,000.”<sup>162</sup>

Herskovits’s leadership of the Ford Foundation Conference on Africa and the recommendation that Ford finance a major African studies program at Northwestern set the stage for just that event.<sup>163</sup> The Ford Foundation decided that in addition to funding individual fellowships, it would finance university programs in African studies so that young researchers could get proper training and mature scholars could continue their careers.<sup>164</sup> On the Ford Foundation’s suggestion, Herskovits submitted a formal request for a five-year grant of between \$200,000 and \$250,000. The grant would be used primarily for faculty research, training fellowships, library development, visiting lecturers, and field research fellowships.<sup>165</sup> In 1954 the Ford Foundation announced its first grants to African studies programs. Northwestern received a five-year grant for \$235,000, while Boston University, which had started its program the previous year, received a \$200,000 grant for the same period.<sup>166</sup> Howard University’s African studies program received \$29,000 from 1954 to 1957.<sup>167</sup>

The Ford Foundation became the most important institution in creating and developing the key area studies programs, and specifically African studies programs, in the United States. From 1959 to 1963 the foundation provided about \$26 million for area studies and language

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programs at fifteen schools, including Northwestern.<sup>168</sup> As Edward Berman has observed, “By the mid-1960s the Ford Foundation had allocated the staggering sum of \$138 million to a limited number of universities for the training of foreign-area and international-affairs specialists.”<sup>169</sup> Ford also became the key foundation supporting the development of African studies programs. From 1954 to 1974 Ford gave \$20 million to African studies programs and to young scholars for fieldwork in Africa through the Foreign Area Fellowships.<sup>170</sup> A significant number of these awards went to Northwestern’s students. For instance, in May 1955 three of the fourteen Ford Foundation grants for African research and study went to Northwestern students.<sup>171</sup>

The Ford Foundation’s support for African studies transformed the discipline. With Ford funding, Northwestern’s program expanded, while new African studies programs were established throughout the country.<sup>172</sup> From 1953 to 1961 ten new African studies programs or centers were created, and by 1967 there were about forty African studies programs and centers.<sup>173</sup> By 1955 growth in the field was evidenced by the large number of institutions—Northwestern, Boston University, Howard University, the Library of Congress, Roosevelt University (formerly Roosevelt College), Stanford University, and Yale University—represented at a Conference of African Area Study Centers at Northwestern.<sup>174</sup>

Meanwhile, Herskovits played a leading role in the establishment and the early development of the ASA. He chaired the 1955 Conference of African Area Study Centers, which decided to create a journal for African studies and an American Society of African Studies.<sup>175</sup> These goals reached fruition with the founding of the ASA in 1957 and the publication of the first issue of the *African Studies Bulletin* (later replaced by the *African Studies Review*) in 1958.<sup>176</sup> At the 1957 conference, which was financed by the Carnegie Corporation, Herskovits was named the association’s first president, and thirty-six leading Africanists, including foundation and government officials as well as academics, joined as charter members.<sup>177</sup> The Ford Foundation provided an initial grant of \$25,000 to support the first two years of the ASA’s operations.<sup>178</sup>

In 1958 the first meeting of the ASA was held at Northwestern University with about 175 attendees, including political scientists, lawyers, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, geographers, engineers, and



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educators primarily interested in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>179</sup> The ASA grew rapidly; by 1959 it had 597 members and by 1966, 1,400 members.<sup>180</sup>

The early years of the ASA were not without controversy. The inclusion of foundation and government officials as charter members of the ASA was viewed by some as an indication that political considerations, not scholarship, would be paramount. Anthropologist Elliot Skinner has pointed out that the founding members of the ASA “appeared to see themselves as intellectually neutral scholars, and not American citizens who had a clear interest in Africa. Certainly the twelve of them who came from the Department of State, from the United States Information Agency, from the United Nations, from the Carnegie Corporation, and from missionary societies must have known that the ASA would involve more than scholarship.”<sup>181</sup>

In his presidential address to the first ASA meeting, Herskovits suggested either naively or disingenuously that Americans were specially placed to undertake dispassionate work on Africa.<sup>182</sup> He claimed that since Americans were “removed in space from the African scene” and had “no territorial commitments in Africa, we come easily by a certain physical and psychological distance from the problems we study that . . . bring[s] us naturally to a heightened degree of objectivity.”<sup>183</sup> As Elliot Skinner has observed, this conception was fraught with faulty assumptions. While the United States is physically distant from Africa, its psychological distance was undercut by American involvement in the Cold War. Moreover, Skinner “wonder[ed] . . . whether the ASA president realized that there were blacks in the audience who had physical if not psychological ties to Africa, and who would always have a commitment to that continent because, like it or not, Africa was in their skins. I also wondered what myopia blinded him to the fact that as a white American he was a citizen of a country with a fatal flaw for continuing to discriminate against people with African skins. No commitments?”<sup>184</sup>

Nonetheless, after a decade of operation, Northwestern’s program could point to significant achievements. Twenty-five students and several faculty members had carried out research in fifteen African countries.<sup>185</sup> Twelve courses were taught in six departments: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, and civil engineering. The anthropology department offered three courses: “The Peoples of Africa,” “The Native Under Colonial Rule,” and “Seminar in African Ethnology.”<sup>186</sup> Unlike many of the other African studies programs, which were

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more oriented toward practical problem solving or government service, Northwestern's program was "dedicated to the aim of producing creative scholars" who would be able to deal with a dynamic African situation in various disciplines.<sup>187</sup>

In addition, Herskovits helped integrate blacks into the program and played a leading role in bringing black Africans to the United States as professors and students. Herskovits invited many visiting professors from Africa to teach at Northwestern. In 1954 Gold Coast legislator and anthropologist Kofi A. Busia, who later served as prime minister of Ghana, taught at Northwestern.<sup>188</sup> Kenneth O. Dike, pioneer African historian and vice principal of the University College of Ibadan, Nigeria, was a visiting history professor at Northwestern in 1958.<sup>189</sup> In 1946 Herskovits helped create the Committee on African Students in North America under the auspices of the GEB and served as a charter member. In that capacity, he persuaded the committee to include native Africans on the student selection committees.<sup>190</sup> He used Northwestern's African studies program to help several black Africans get Ph.D.s. Northwestern's first African Ph.D., Nigerian economist Pius Nwabufo Charles Okigbo (1924–2000), received his degree in economics in 1956.<sup>191</sup> Eduardo Mondlane (1920–1969), a leader of the independence movement in Mozambique, received his Ph.D. in sociology from Northwestern in 1961. Mondlane's admission to graduate study and his receipt of a Carnegie Corporation fellowship was facilitated in part by Herskovits's strongly supportive letter of recommendation.<sup>192</sup> The large increase during the postwar era in the number of African students at American universities, primarily in the Midwest, can be partially attributed to Herskovits's actions.<sup>193</sup>

Notwithstanding his support for African students, several scholars have accused Herskovits of limiting opportunities for African American students in Africa. They have claimed that Herskovits resisted training black students in African studies because he believed that they would not be objective about African cultures due to their own African heritage. The truth of this statement is difficult to discern. Logic would seem to argue against it. Nobody argues that Herskovits discouraged African students from studying Africa. If African American students were biased because of their African heritage, then African students would be more so. Nonetheless, as both Herskovits boosters and critics agree, there was

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a generally held view that “the best ethnography needed ‘outsiders’ to do it.”<sup>194</sup>

There is no question that Herskovits had few black American students during the 1950s and 1960s who did research in Africa. But Herskovits did encourage several black students and scholars to conduct research in Africa. As mentioned earlier, Herskovits taught Ralph Bunche and encouraged him to get a fellowship to do research in southern and eastern Africa as an SSRC fellow in 1936–37. Herskovits’s student Johnnetta B. Cole did research during the early 1960s in Liberia. Moreover, Cole has written that Herskovits had a special place in his heart for African American students.<sup>195</sup>

There were several factors that served to limit black students entering anthropology and African studies at Northwestern, independent of Herskovits’s influence. St. Clair Drake, who maintained that “Herskovits never attempted to recruit and train Afro-Americans,” has also observed that during the Great Depression, “black students in the social sciences were more inclined to concentrate on sociology or economics than in what seemed to be a luxury field—anthropology—even when they felt that some of the work of white scholars was valuable.”<sup>196</sup> Drake recalled that during the 1930s, black students wanted to enter a field, like sociology, that they believed was relevant to problems faced by African Americans. Moreover, blacks eschewed anthropology because the opportunities for black anthropologists were severely limited. Most black colleges had no anthropology department, while white colleges and agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Bureau of American Ethnology rarely hired black scholars.<sup>197</sup> The accusation that Herskovits may have suggested that African American students would not be objective about African cultures may have some basis in the belief of many at that time “that one should be an outsider to maintain one’s objectivity.”<sup>198</sup>

Blacks also generally eschewed African studies before the 1960s because of their desire to distance themselves from Africa, which many believed was backward and uncivilized.<sup>199</sup> This negative perception of Africa, also held by most whites, was sustained by the pejorative depiction of Africans in American books, schools, and movies, as well as in the media. Era Belle Thompson, an African American editor, recalled her own negative perception of Africa in a book she published in 1954: “Had anyone called me an African I would have been indignant.” This was in

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great part because the schools and the media “made a shambles of my African background.”<sup>200</sup> In 1943 British Africanist Edwin Smith noted that few American blacks were interested in Africa. When he met William Leo Hansberry of Howard, he called him “the first enthusiastic Negro Africanist I have encountered.”<sup>201</sup>

Other factors limited African American participation in African studies at Northwestern. Until the late 1940s Northwestern’s anthropology department was quite small, and there was little funding available for any graduate students.<sup>202</sup> Herskovits student Simon Ottenberg recalled that colonial regimes would have denied visas to African Americans. In Nigeria in 1951–53, with a few elite exceptions, black Africans were denied access to white housing and other white facilities. In addition, the colonials were often skeptical of any Americans who they perceived as antagonistic toward colonialism.<sup>203</sup> Perhaps if Herskovits sent over black students, this would have jeopardized all Herskovits students from having access to colonial African societies.

In 1961 Northwestern’s program was assured of long-term survival and expansion when the Ford Foundation approved a ten-year grant for \$1,300,000. As part of this grant, Herskovits was appointed to the first endowed chair of African studies in the United States.<sup>204</sup> Funding was also provided for visiting international professors, faculty research, research fellowships and scholarships, and staff salaries in economics, history, art, and linguistics.<sup>205</sup>

Herskovits’s promotion of African studies was one of his greatest successes. During the prewar era he helped establish the field as a legitimate area of study for American anthropologists. In the postwar era, in a political and intellectual climate that supported the development of area studies programs, Herskovits helped ensure that African studies would be accorded its proper place in American universities. His advocacy for African studies at Northwestern and other universities—his wartime critique of Fisk and the University of Pennsylvania notwithstanding—led to substantial growth for the discipline. As a result, Herskovits student Robert A. Lystad could report in 1966 that thirty-eight colleges and universities had established centers of African studies.<sup>206</sup>

Paradoxically, Herskovits’s success in placing African studies on a firm footing was largely due to the fact that the Cold War provided the rationale for the foundations and the government to sink millions of

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dollars into creating experts on Africa. While he capitalized on this Cold War largesse, Herskovits sought to convince American policymakers that the best policy—for the United States and for Africa—required making decisions in concert with African officials based on what best served Africa rather than based on Cold War calculations.

## Foreign Policy Critic

It will be interesting to get the reaction to my first attempt to work in the area of every day affairs. —Melville J. Herskovits to Horace Kallen, October 21, 1959

**H**ERSKOVITS'S PROMINENCE as America's foremost scholar of Africa and head of its most celebrated African studies program thrust him into the role of foreign policy analyst during and after World War II. An outspoken advocate for African self-determination, Herskovits sought to encourage Africans and Americans to respect their cultural differences, and he wanted to provide a basis for American aid rooted in African needs. But most American policy-makers and foundation officials had a different vision for African studies programs. They sought to train specialists in international studies who could provide the expertise needed to defend American security interests in the context of the Cold War. While American policymakers sometimes expressed rhetorical support for African self-government, policy initiatives generally opposed or ignored African independence movements. During World War II the United States supported the reestablishment of French colonial rule over North Africa. In the 1950s and 1960s Cold War calculations drove American policy in Africa. At first the Eisenhower administration considered Africa of minor importance, deferring to America's NATO allies in making decisions about Africa. As independence movements in Africa began to achieve success during the second Eisenhower term, American policymakers sought to ensure that anti-Communists would lead the new states.<sup>1</sup> While Herskovits promoted and benefited from the rise of area studies, he sharply criticized Cold War political strategies that promoted this development. Consequently, he attacked the United States's Africa policy. He rejected Cold War-based

foreign policy because he believed that it would prop up imperialist regimes in Africa and threaten international peace. Herskovits sought to make sure that policy decisions on Africa were based on the needs of Africa as well as those of the United States and its allies. Indeed, he believed that such an approach would yield benefits for both Africa and the United States. During the 1950s Herskovits became increasingly critical of America's Cold War policies in Africa. Because his criticism was ignored, African independence was delayed, and the continent's political and economic problems were exacerbated.

The Second World War taught Herskovits that scholarship and activism could not always remain separate. The wartime collapse of France, Holland, and Belgium and the resulting destabilization of European colonial control of Africa compelled Herskovits, as the foremost American expert on Africa, to speak out on U.S. policy and take an advisory role with the government.<sup>2</sup> "I have rather hated to get into this controversial field of colonial problems, but sooner or later somebody has to speak for the native," Herskovits told a colleague in 1944.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he maintained that "the anthropologist is best fitted to see the strains and stresses of underprivileged groups, or of natives who no longer control their own lives. . . . Where . . . he is in a position to aid in obtaining for the natives he knows some reinstatement of the human rights they have been deprived of, he customarily welcomes the opportunity."<sup>4</sup> Thus he disavowed his longtime endorsement of detached scholarship wherein he rejected a policy role for scholars as compromising one's objectivity. In a 1948 speech to University of Illinois medical students, Herskovits reflected his altered view, advising the students that a "scientist's responsibility does not end with unearthing new facts. He has an obligation to society. He must come out of his ivory tower and help put the information to use."<sup>5</sup> Although Herskovits combined scholarship and advocacy on international issues, he refrained from doing so on domestic issues. He never addressed this inconsistency.

During the war Herskovits was impressed by the emerging nationalist movements against European colonialism in Asia and Africa and spoke out for self-determination for subject peoples. Appalled at the failure of the West to recognize the development of nationalism, he told a colleague that "history is going to record the fact that the great blind spot in

our day was taking for granted the acceptance by native peoples of foreign domination.”<sup>6</sup>

Herskovits publicized his views in hopes of influencing the colonial powers and the United States to support a process that would lead to independence for the colonies. In his 1943 report for Northwestern’s Committee on Post-War International Problems, entitled “Problem IX, Colonies and Dependent Areas,” and in a 1944 article for *Foreign Affairs*, entitled “Native Self-Government,” which he sent to Acting Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, he detailed his proposals.<sup>7</sup> Herskovits’s beliefs in cultural pluralism and cultural relativism undergirded his views on relations between the West and dependent areas. He rejected the widely held view that African cultures were inferior to Western cultures, offering numerous examples of African societies with complex political and social structures, some autocratic and others democratic, predating the colonial era. Herskovits also emphasized the fact that Africans, like other peoples, remained confident in their own systems and cultures and opposed political and social changes imposed from the outside.<sup>8</sup> He asserted that “native peoples over all the world have a degree of competence for self-government” and have “the right to live in terms of their own traditional ways of life.”<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, the anthropologist recognized the practical problems of an increasingly intertwined world. Herskovits insisted that “all peoples [must be integrated] into a world political and economic system.” This emerging world order must incorporate the cultures of non-Western peoples and not be based simply on “the Euro-American model.” This should be accomplished “by inducing every group, through cooperative procedures, to adapt its particular ways of life to the requirements of the larger orientation and thus gain for themselves the advantages that will accrue to them as a result of this.”<sup>10</sup> Anthropologists’ cultural sensitivity meant that they could play an important role in easing this transition by helping to adapt these changes to traditional ways.<sup>11</sup> In addition, there should be native input in all decision-making about prospective changes.<sup>12</sup>

Herskovits proposed an orderly transition based on a set timetable leading to independence for African colonies. Necessary changes to establish autonomy should be induced, not imposed.<sup>13</sup> He noted that although European imperialism had brought some benefits to European colonies — sanitation, security, new goods — the dependent peoples



strongly desired independence. Because colonialism had transformed the political landscape and suppressed traditional political structures, an “abrupt withdrawal of the colonial powers . . . would result in chaos.”<sup>14</sup> The first step toward independence required the immediate implementation of local autonomy in politics, economics, marriage, religion, and morality. Herskovits recommended that an international organization protect colonial peoples’ cultures during this period. Colonial administrators should be placed under international regulation, and indigenous peoples should have the right to voice their concerns. To ensure a collaborative process, the imperial powers and the dependent peoples must be educated to understand each other’s cultural and political perspectives. In this way, Herskovits reproved those who argued that Africans alone required education as a prerequisite for independence.<sup>15</sup>

During the latter part of the Second World War Herskovits spoke out forcefully against colonialism on the radio and in popular magazines.<sup>16</sup> In a 1944 letter to the *New Republic*, he criticized an article, suffused with paternalism and derogatory statements toward Africans, in which the author argued for a multinational organization of Western countries to preside over the colonial transition to independence. Herskovits insisted that any plan for African independence must take into account what Africans wanted. He argued that freedom for Africans, as for all people, meant “[f]reedom for all men and women to live their lives in their own ways, and in terms of those ways of life, to govern themselves.” Moreover, Herskovits reproved the author for describing West Africa prior to the colonial era as being “in an early stage of barbarism.”<sup>17</sup> As evidence that Herskovits did, as he said, “approach the colonial system from . . . [the perspective] of the native peoples who are ruled by it,” a Nigerian student at the University of Chicago praised Herskovits’s position. Mbono Ojikwe wrote to Herskovits, “On behalf of the oppressed people of Nigeria and other colonies may I thank you for helping us in the fight against imperialism and distortion of facts about us.”<sup>18</sup> In July 1945 Herskovits lauded W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* for its powerful argument that the realization of self-determination for colonized peoples would increase the prospects for international peace in the postwar era.<sup>19</sup>

Herskovits’s belief that Africa’s needs should take precedence in American foreign policy calculations brought him into conflict with America’s Africa policy during the postwar era. With the emergence of the Cold

War during the late 1940s, the United States embraced a “politics of preventive development” in which policymakers sought to improve living conditions in Africa and Asia to limit the attractiveness of Communism and thus prevent the development of Communist regimes. During the Anglo-American Pentagon Talks of 1947, convened to reconsider policies toward Africa and the Middle East, British and American officials agreed to support policies to improve living standards in these regions. These officials hoped that such policies would reduce general dissatisfaction and thus limit the influence of Communist ideology and the Soviet Union. Toward these ends, American officials approved “technical aid and assistance programs, introduced Point IV [a foreign aid program] in 1949, and stressed the importance of cultivating pro-American elites.”<sup>20</sup> The U.S. government encouraged the “emergence of competent leaders, relatively well-disposed to the West, through programs designed for this purpose, including, where possible a conscious, though perhaps covert, effort to cultivate and aid such potential leaders.”<sup>21</sup>

Even as Herskovits embraced an active engagement with government, he sought to protect his intellectual independence. Thus, while he sought to influence American foreign policy, he refused to accept government assistance for Northwestern’s African studies program, relying instead on philanthropic foundations in financing many of his field trips. Herskovits took this stance because he did not believe that the acceptance of foundation money compromised his scholarly independence, but he did believe that the acceptance of government funding would compromise the program’s independence and might alter its priorities, which were independent research and scholarly training. Therefore Herskovits refused to train government officials for the Ph.D.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, unlike many social scientists, Herskovits did not pursue government service during the 1950s. This stand distinguished him from those who were enticed to government service by their anti-Soviet beliefs and the opportunity to gain federal funding and increase their status by working on huge government research programs. The government’s development projects offered a “a well-funded laboratory—frequently the only well-funded laboratory during the early Cold War years—for the study of displaced and disappearing cultures.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, as Christopher Simpson has shown, “encouraged by the promise of reformist political administrations, many of the world’s most sophisticated social scientists made ‘ideological offensives’ and military and in-

telligence projects integral to their day-to-day work.”<sup>24</sup> For instance, in Project Troy, numerous social scientists received federal government financing to hold a series of meetings at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology during 1950 and 1951 in an attempt to fight the Cold War by producing and disseminating anti-Soviet propaganda behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>25</sup>

Herskovits did, however, invite major and minor government officials to participate in seminars organized by Northwestern’s African studies program. At the 1951 Institute on Contemporary Africa, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs George C. McGhee delivered a speech entitled “Africa’s Role in the Free World Today.”<sup>26</sup> McGhee argued that immediate independence for African colonies would do more harm than good because the “primitive, uneducated peoples” would be exploited by “indigenous leaders, unrestrained by the civil standards that come with widespread education.” In addition, he invoked Cold War politics when he maintained that “premature independence” would “endanger . . . the security of the free world.”<sup>27</sup>

Herskovits balanced the views of U.S. government officials by inviting African nationalists to speak at the Northwestern seminars. In 1950, for example, Nnamdi Azikiwe, a leading Nigerian nationalist who later served as Nigeria’s first president, lectured on the Nigerian nationalist movement.<sup>28</sup> About a year later Eduardo C. Mondlane, who would play a key role in the movement for independence in Mozambique, spoke at Northwestern’s Africa seminar.<sup>29</sup> Tom Mboya, a Kenyan nationalist, also lectured at Northwestern during the 1950s.<sup>30</sup>

The federal government provided substantial funding to area studies programs after the adoption of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958, passed in response to the Soviet Union’s successful launching of the first space satellite, *Sputnik*. Title VI of the NDEA financed the study of “uncommon” languages and the peoples who spoke those languages. This legislation greatly expanded African studies programs and made many of these programs government-university partnerships. In 1957 UCLA, Michigan State University, Howard University, Duquesne University, and Syracuse University became Language and Area Centers of the United States Office of Education.<sup>31</sup> Prior to NDEA funding, only Howard University, the Foreign Service Institute, and four missionary colleges taught African languages. As the programs at Northwestern and Boston University did not teach any African lan-

guages, they were ineligible for funding. Herskovits had long opposed training in African languages as an inefficient use of resources. Resources aside, Herskovits's position on African languages appears to contradict his own position on the importance of understanding indigenous peoples from their own perspective. But he maintained that linguistics training provided the tools to deal more effectively with the numerous languages in Africa.<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, Herskovits's African-centered perspective distinguished him from many liberal academics and policymakers. Informed by his cultural relativism and his extensive study of African culture, Herskovits rejected the idea that African traditions should be disregarded. By contrast, many liberals "were troubled . . . by the parochialism of African societies (meaning, in fact, the parochialism of individual Africans they talked to.)"<sup>33</sup> They "saw justice and progress as dependent on the triumph of rationality over superstition."<sup>34</sup> For them, tradition was the enemy of progress. In this way, many liberals devalued African traditions and history.<sup>35</sup> Herskovits, however, took just the opposite position, arguing that African cultures deserved the same respect as Western cultures. He opposed "the unfortunate tendency of Europeans to think in terms of Africa and Africans having to adjust themselves to European ways." Herskovits argued that America's Africa policy would be successful only to the extent that it was based on respect for African cultures.<sup>36</sup>

Herskovits had long supported the development of indigenous institutions. Three decades earlier he had attacked a Phelps-Stokes Fund report, prepared by Thomas Jesse Jones, that sought to impose education policies and systems on Africa. Jones's report, *Education in Africa*, based on two studies of African education, recommended that "the greater part of the American Negro educational system could be transplanted to Africa." African education would consist of training in health and sanitation; agriculture, industry, and elementary education; safety in the home; and "healthful recreation." Although most American educators praised these recommendations, Herskovits, like W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, disapproved. Herskovits argued against the use of American educational methods in Africa. Rather, African methods should be used. Methods should not be imposed from the outside.<sup>37</sup>

Like the majority of liberal intellectuals, Herskovits strongly supported African economic development and American assistance to Africa. But unlike many other liberals, he insisted that American offi-

cialists pursue development based on knowledge and respect for African cultures. Herskovits asserted that the “central problem” for African-European relations was “how to assure to a world economy the utilization of the natural and human potentialities of Africa, while at the same time, preserving to the native peoples the greatest possible measure of political, social, and cultural autonomy, and assuring that, in being brought ever more intimately into contact with this world economy, their lives will not be demoralized.”<sup>38</sup> Toward these ends, in April 1950 Herskovits advised the assistant secretary of state for economic affairs that short-term intensive courses by anthropologists could make an important contribution to the Point IV program by teaching officials “the validity of the ways of life of other peoples,” so they could use this understanding in implementing changes. Herskovits had used this technique with success during his stint with the Civil Affairs Training Program when he taught American Occupation officers to respect Japanese culture.<sup>39</sup> In February 1951 Herskovits attended the SSRC’s Second Conference on Social Science Problems of Point IV and again spoke out in favor of these ideas.<sup>40</sup>

Herskovits’s defense of indigenous African traditions impelled him to back the formation of the Paris-based journal, *Présence Africaine*, which was founded by several proponents of Negritude, the movement by French-speaking Africans to spread traditional African values and traditions.<sup>41</sup> In 1956 Herskovits sent a message of support to the “first world conference of black writers and artists,” held in Paris under the auspices of *Présence Africaine*. He reiterated his view that “in movements toward change, the strong cultural values of the African should not be overshadowed by the values of the outside world.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, six years later, Aimé Césaire, a West Indian poet and founder of the Negritude movement, told Herskovits, “But you yourself are one of the architects of Negritude! Read *The Myth of the Negro Past*. There it is!”<sup>43</sup>

Just as in the debate on black culture and African survivals, Herskovits’s views conflicted with those of some African American intellectuals. Distinguished black author Richard Wright spoke at the *Présence Africaine* conference and rejected the views propounded by Herskovits and most other participants. Wright argued that Western-backed industrial development should take precedence over the maintenance or development of indigenous traditions, values, and institutions. His statement enraged many of the participants.<sup>44</sup> Wright’s rejection of African tradi-

tions paralleled his own views on black culture in the United States. He accepted the view that blacks had been stripped of their culture during the Middle Passage and that African American culture was a pathological version of white culture.<sup>45</sup>

At a time when cultural relativism was under attack, Herskovits employed this concept in an attempt to influence the formulation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1947. The Second World War and the fight against Nazism had caused many to question cultural relativism. As John Diggins has observed, “the rise of totalitarianism forced intellectuals and scholars to consider that certain behavior must be judged by standards that are universal rather than conditional, and for many it would be the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and its ideals of liberty and equality.”<sup>46</sup> Consequently, a number of intellectuals, including anthropologist Ruth Benedict, began to distance themselves from their earlier relativism. In the context of Nazi German aggression in Europe, Benedict moderated the relativist position she had advocated in *Patterns of Culture* (1934). In that work, Benedict had maintained that though cultures might differ, all were “equally valid patterns of life.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore she argued that “wisdom consists in a greatly increased tolerance toward their divergencies.”<sup>48</sup> During the early 1940s, however, Benedict changed her emphasis. For Benedict, relativism made sense as a conceptual framework for defending “racial equality and cultural pluralism in a democratic culture.” But in the context of Nazi aggression, she “felt it was necessary to go ‘beyond relativity’ to ‘discover the ways and means of social cohesion,’ and to find a common ground for cultural values in the universal human desire for freedom.”<sup>49</sup>

Herskovits, however, continued to defend relativism as a philosophy for all times, even during the Second World War. Cultural relativism did not preclude the use of warfare in self-defense. Nor did it mean that a culture should abandon its own values. Self-defense was warranted when one’s culture and society were under attack, as in the cases of both Nazi aggression and Western imperialism. Herskovits maintained that in reaction to Japanese and German aggression, America suffered from demoralization just like Africans and Asians had as a result of Western imperialist expansion. Because insiders saw great value in their own culture, the threat or the actuality of invasion was doubly demoralizing, as an outside force sought to replace one’s culture. Herskovits argued that Americans

should reaffirm their own values to meet the threat of attack. Cultural relativism, for Herskovits, required that one culture respect the values of another culture. But a society under attack that accepted outside domination would be practicing submission, not tolerance.<sup>50</sup>

Herskovits's strong support for cultural relativism made him a natural choice by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to write a memo to ensure that the UDHR excluded ethnocentric values. In 1947 Herskovits prepared the AAA's Statement on Human Rights, which he submitted to Eleanor Roosevelt, chair of the UN's Commission on Human Rights. Invoking the relativist perspective, Herskovits sought to stop the West from imposing its values on the less powerful countries of the world, particularly those in Africa and Asia. Therefore he maintained that a statement on human rights could not be limited to the values of Euro-American culture but must respect the values of all cultures. Cultures could not and should not be judged by outsiders, nor could cultures be ranked in a hierarchy. Herskovits cautioned against "philosophical systems that have stressed absolutes in the realm of values and ends." The racial and cultural chauvinism of Western Europe had provided the justification for colonization and subjection of Asian and African peoples, with the resulting "disintegration of human rights among the peoples over whom hegemony has been established."<sup>51</sup>

Herskovits offered three propositions, all part of a cultural relativist perspective.<sup>52</sup> First, certain assumptions would need to be accepted based on scientific evidence. Research had demonstrated that cultural differences were determined by "historic forces, not biological ones." The only criterion for a successful culture was whether it had survived to the present. Second, Herskovits asserted, "[r]espect for differences between cultures is validated by the scientific fact that no technique of qualitatively evaluating cultures has been discovered." Third, "[s]tandards and values are relative to the culture from which they derive so that any attempt to formulate postulates that grow out of the beliefs or moral codes of one culture must to that extent detract from the applicability of any Declaration of Human Rights to mankind as a whole."<sup>53</sup>

Then Herskovits suggested that in establishing global "standards of freedom and justice," the United Nations must do so "based on the principle that man is free only when he lives as his society defines freedom, that his rights are those he recognizes as a member of his society." For Herskovits, freedom was a concept that was present in all cul-

tures, but the meaning of freedom varied across cultures. Thus he distinguished between the universal presence of a concept of freedom in all cultures and the lack of uniform agreement on what freedom meant to different cultures. The UDHR, he insisted, must guarantee “the right of men to live in terms of their own traditions.”<sup>54</sup>

Herskovits sought to deflect anticipated criticism that toleration of cultural differences meant toleration of such brutal systems as Nazism. He asserted that when political systems excluded citizen participation or sanctioned invasions of neighboring countries, then “underlying cultural values may be called on to bring the peoples of such states to a realization of the consequences of the acts of their governments, and thus enforce a brake upon discrimination and conquest.” Here Herskovits sought to distinguish a country’s political system from its culture. Nazism was not equivalent to German culture. Government was only one aspect of a people’s culture, and thus toleration of another people’s culture did not mean respect for a government that brutalized its people or invaded its neighbors.<sup>55</sup>

Despite his efforts to disarm his critics, or perhaps because of them, Herskovits’s statement on human rights aroused tremendous controversy among anthropologists. A number of colleagues, notably Robert Redfield, argued that Herskovits had contradicted his own relativistic philosophy by proposing tolerance as a world value. In doing so, they asserted, Herskovits was imposing an American value on other cultures.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Julian Steward argued that the statement contradicted itself by expressing tolerance as a value but rejecting any value judgments. Moreover, Steward could not personally sanction toleration of Nazism, social castes in India, or racial castes in America. He asserted, “Either we tolerate everything, and keep hands off, or we fight intolerance and conquest—political and economic as well as military—in all their forms.” Therefore he argued that the AAA, as an organization, should avoid declarations of human rights because in doing so, it “can come perilously close to advocacy of American ideological imperialism” by proposing an American value of toleration to other cultures.<sup>57</sup> Homer Barnett maintained that the AAA had stepped beyond its role as a scientific organization by making a statement about rights that were purely subjective and thus were outside its purview. Barnett held to a strict view of objectivity whereby pronouncements of policy or ways to solve problems would compromise that objectivity. Anthropologists could not “at



the same time be moralists (or policy makers) and scientists.” He also criticized the statement that when governments “deny citizens the right of participation in their government, or seek to conquer weaker peoples, underlying cultural values may be called on to bring the peoples of such states to a realization of the consequences of the actions of their governments, and thus force a brake upon discrimination and conquest.” This would imply that outsiders would intervene to help impose a value, seemingly the opposite of tolerance.<sup>58</sup>

John Bennett backed the statement on human rights and criticized those who assumed that science could be value free. All scientists have values to which they adhere. If scientists refuse to take a stand on an issue, they would have an impact just as if they had taken a stand. He argued that science could not be separated from social life and that the implications of scientific research were inescapable. Anthropologists could not just retire from the scene after issuing their research. They were citizens as well as scientists; whether or not they took a position, they would have an impact.<sup>59</sup>

Ralph L. Beals, chair of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at UCLA, told Herskovits that his statement meant that a fascist movement in a particular country should be allowed to continue as long as it did not attempt to expand beyond its borders.<sup>60</sup> Herskovits responded, “The question you raise about the UN document is one that has occurred to many people. It is not an easy question to answer. The position we take, though, is that tolerance is a reciprocal matter. From this it follows that any aggression by one people that threatens the way of life of another, should be resisted. . . . Of course, we must distinguish governments from total cultures of which they are a part. But if we deny to any people the right to run their own affairs, that gives any people the right to deny us the same thing.” Herskovits’s main concern was with the weaker peoples of the world. He told Beals that “we are asking the United Nations to . . . recognize the validity of the ways of life of peoples who are powerless to resist encroachments by states that have the force to make good the imposition of foreign culture. But the preservation of cultural autonomy, I think, does not have to be primary in all things.” Thus Herskovits’s philosophy was particularly informed by his aversion to imperialism. But when powerful countries sought to subjugate others, as the Nazis sought to do, they were not entitled to the respect entailed by a strictly construed cultural relativism. Herskovits realized

that his position was in this way questionable, but he believed that the paradox was inherent in relativism.<sup>61</sup>

In his elaboration of cultural relativism, Herskovits was primarily interested in dispelling notions of Western cultural chauvinism, which had been used to justify Western imperialism and domination of numerous countries in Africa and Asia. From Herskovits's perspective, growing up in a world where indigenous cultures were dominated by more powerful societies, the greater good was protecting the cultural values of the weak from domination by the powerful West. A staunch anti-imperialist, Herskovits used his influence to chip away at the racial and cultural arrogance of Euro-American peoples. He believed that cultural relativism and its concomitant, tolerance, would provide a corrective to the still evident racial and cultural chauvinism that had caused much of the violence, brutality, and demoralization of the twentieth century. But Herskovits was unwilling to take the next step, which would have required the search for global values that diverse cultures could agree on.

In contrast, the UDHR, adopted in 1948, affirmed that universal human rights did exist across cultural barriers. But the authors of the document also accepted the anthropological value of tolerance of diverse cultural and religious practices and beliefs as formulated by Herskovits. Article 26 stated that education should "promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace." But the UDHR went far beyond the notion of cross-cultural tolerance by agreeing that there were certain universal values such as racial, gender, religious, and cultural equality that could be embraced by all peoples as universal human rights.<sup>62</sup>

Herskovits believed that "the greatest contribution a discipline like anthropology can be, is . . . to establish a sound basis for a philosophy that will meet the needs of a world society." Cultural relativism was the philosophy that laid the foundation for a world society.<sup>63</sup> And that was anthropology's and Herskovits's great contribution to international peace. A world based on the ideals of tolerance and mutual respect for diverse individuals and diverse cultures would have a better chance for peace than one based on intolerance and racial and cultural chauvinism. Herskovits maintained that the key to cultural relativism was "respect for differences . . . mutual respect."<sup>64</sup> It was Herskovits's hope that a rela-

tivistic philosophy would spare the world a continuation of the brutal racism and imperialism of the first half of the twentieth century.

During President Dwight Eisenhower's second term, when African nationalist movements were transforming the continent from colonial dependencies into independent states, Herskovits — informed by his relativist and African-centered perspective — became an outspoken critic of the administration's policies, which either disregarded or deprecated Africa. Eisenhower treated Africa as an arena in which to strengthen American relations with its NATO allies in Europe. Therefore Eisenhower opposed the nationalist movements in Africa because he accepted the argument of the European colonialists that these movements were instigated or led by Communists. Eisenhower viewed the nationalist movements and independent states as an invitation to instability and Communist infiltration. Moreover, he deferred to the United States's NATO allies on questions of aid to newly independent African states, refusing requests of economic or military assistance "unless the former colonial power agreed to the request." In 1959 Eisenhower rejected the newly independent state of Guinea's requests for aid. This action convinced Sekou Touré, the country's leader, to accept assistance from Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Eisenhower's policies may have solidified U.S.-NATO relations, but they also alienated Africans.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, as many African countries moved toward independence after 1955, there was a significant increase in government, academic, and media interest in Africa. The government's heightened interest in Africa was shaped "by concern about possible Soviet influence in the new states."<sup>66</sup> In this climate of increased concern about Africa, Herskovits's advice that the United States should give more consideration to Africa in its foreign policy found support. In March 1956 Herskovits wrote to Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois to suggest the creation of an assistant secretary of state for sub-Saharan Africa. Douglas forwarded the suggestion to Senator J. William Fulbright, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, who promised to consider the proposal, commenting that "it would be even more important if we could find a way to inject a little wisdom into the head of the Secretary of State."<sup>67</sup> Later that year the State Department created an Office of African Affairs, and two years later Eisenhower appointed the first assistant secretary of state for African affairs.<sup>68</sup>

During the Eisenhower administration Herskovits twice testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Herskovits employed his scholarship to counsel the senators that an effective Africa policy required respect for African cultures and peoples and support for African independence, self-determination, and economic growth. He also challenged the dominant Cold War paradigm by advising policymakers to reject a view of Africa as just another Cold War battleground.

In his first appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in 1958, Herskovits sought to give American policymakers the African perspective, based on his longtime study of the continent. In addition, Herskovits gently tried to steer the senators toward a more sympathetic and knowledgeable policy concerning the emerging independent African nations. He emphasized that policymakers needed to understand the dynamic nature of culture contact in Africa and the traditional cultures of Africa in order to make effective decisions. Thus he told the senators that African political institutions were developing based on traditional forms and in adjustment to the colonial boundaries set up by the imperial powers. Perhaps too optimistically, Herskovits noted, "we are already witnessing adjustments that make of a man a Nigerian as well as a Yoruba or an Ibo."<sup>69</sup> Herskovits believed that with the end of colonialism, however, ethnic tensions could reemerge; he did not necessarily expect the new states to be more virtuous than other states throughout the world.<sup>70</sup>

Herskovits tried to enlighten the senators about some of the traditional political practices of West Africans. He cautioned that although traditional politics in West Africa might appear autocratic to the West, traditional African political institutions had democratic aspects as well. Before rendering decisions, paramount chiefs received advice and approval from counselors, village chiefs, and the men of the villages.<sup>71</sup>

Herskovits advised the senators that development aid, which he supported, must take into account traditional African practices and proceed with African input. African farmers generally held land in common with the members of their kinship group. In addition, many African men and women were not accustomed to Western "conceptions of regularity in time and effort." While Africans would accept some external influences, they would reject others. In this connection, Herskovits invoked the statement of Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah that African states "must establish their own personalities." Similarly, many French-

speaking Africans had embraced the idea of Negritude, which also expressed the belief in African values and traditions. Herskovits advised the senators to ensure that Africans were included on planning commissions and in decision-making roles in colonies and independent states. He also advocated increasing the number of African exchange students to the United States.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, Herskovits told the senators that they must formulate policy with the expectation that very shortly Africa would be predominantly independent. He assessed the various colonial regimes in terms of their preparations for the independence of their colonies. The anthropologist argued that during the previous two years, Britain and France had done best in preparing to grant independence to those colonies with small European populations. Both France and Britain had realized that the colonial era was ending and had expanded African participation in the colonial governments. Herskovits asserted that the biggest problems were in those territories with large European populations who opposed independence, such as in British East Africa and French Algeria. Unlike Britain and France, Belgium and Portugal were doing little to prepare their colonies for independence. Herskovits maintained that Belgium's paternalism, in contrast to the policies of Britain and France, faced strong resistance from Africans, an indication of its ineffectiveness.<sup>73</sup>

Two months after Herskovits's testimony, in the midst of the accelerating independence movements in Africa, the Senate authorized the Foreign Relations Committee to undertake an extensive review of American foreign policy. The committee authorized the preparation of fifteen reports, including one on Africa under the direction of Herskovits in his capacity as head of Northwestern's African studies program.<sup>74</sup> In May and June 1958, while preparing the report on Africa, Herskovits convened conferences in Palo Alto, California (at Stanford University), and in New York in which experts and prominent interested parties representing various perspectives gave their input. At the New York conference, Herskovits invited, among others, historian Rayford Logan, David Rockefeller of Chase Manhattan Bank, Claude Barnett of the Associated Negro Press, E. Franklin Frazier (who was unable to attend), and anthropologist (and former student) Hugh Smythe.<sup>75</sup>

On August 28, 1959, Herskovits submitted his 147-page report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee criticizing American policy toward Africa.<sup>76</sup> On his new role as policy analyst, Herskovits remarked to a

friend, "I have for the first time really stepped out of the ivory tower having completed a Study of Africa with recommendations for an American policy there for the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate. . . . It will be interesting to get the reaction to my first attempt to work in the area of every day affairs."<sup>77</sup>

Emphasizing his disagreement with American policy toward Africa, Herskovits began his report by asserting, "The United States has never had a positive, dynamic policy for Africa."<sup>78</sup> Then he proceeded to attack American policy as too often reactive to specific events or too heavily influenced by the needs of Europe. Herskovits also criticized American support of the European colonial powers' policy of ensuring stability by supporting a long-drawn-out transition to independence for African territories, based on evidence of their capacity for self-government.<sup>79</sup> Instead, the United States should insist that the colonial powers set clear timetables for independence. Although he recognized America's need to support its NATO allies, Herskovits insisted that the United States must not permit its foreign policy to be set by Europe. This would fatally wound America's relations with Africa.<sup>80</sup>

Echoing his 1958 testimony, Herskovits emphasized that in policy considerations, it was absolutely essential to recognize the strength with which traditional African cultures resisted Western institutions. Tribal affiliations, traditional rulers and political institutions, traditional cooperative work patterns, and African religious traditions all resisted or modified national loyalties, parliamentary democracy, individualist economic ideology, and Christianity.<sup>81</sup> Africans demanded that their culture and traditions be respected. They would be active agents in determining whether and how to adopt or reject Western ways.<sup>82</sup> "It is thus of the greatest importance for an understanding of contemporary Africa," Herskovits argued, "that we think in terms not of *change*, but of *adjustment*."<sup>83</sup> Here Herskovits demonstrated his respect for African traditions and his disagreement with most liberal intellectuals, who tended to judge indigenous beliefs as superstitions that needed to be replaced by Enlightenment rationalism.<sup>84</sup>

Herskovits asserted that it was essential that American policymakers support racial equality in Africa and at home or risk alienating Africans and jeopardizing good relations with the continent. Therefore the United States should support the dissolution of white-dominated regimes in multiracial African territories such as South Africa, South-West

Africa, Tanganyika, and Southern Rhodesia. To weaken South Africa's white-dominated regime, Herskovits recommended that the United States suspend gold purchases from South Africa and oppose World Bank loans to South Africa.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the United States should support the peaceful extension of rights to all regardless of race. Toward this end, the United States should bar "dealings by government agencies with firms that practice racial discrimination" and prohibit racial discrimination by American missions with their local employees. The United States should require American companies to prohibit racial discrimination in their dealings in Africa. If they did not, they should have to prove they had "used all legal means to comply with this principle in order to receive tax concessions."<sup>86</sup>

Herskovits's recommendations regarding South Africa were consistent with his longtime opposition to its racist policies and leaders. In a 1947 speech entitled "Race as a World Problem," Herskovits had called South Africa the most racist society in the world and had characterized Premier J. C. Smuts as the "the cruelest interracial dictator in the world."<sup>87</sup> Moreover, on his 1957 trip to South Africa — part of an eight-month tour of twenty-four African countries to promote Northwestern's African studies program and to establish contacts to facilitate sending students into the field — Herskovits had tried numerous times to show white South Africans their error in judging people based on race and also demonstrate the impracticalities and absurdities of apartheid. In a talk to 250 white South African students, he responded to a student who questioned whether Africans could be leaders by saying, "it depended on the African, and one should not think in categories."<sup>88</sup> He also tried to persuade these students that by failing to allow blacks to reach their potential, the society wasted precious human resources. But the students remained unconvinced.<sup>89</sup> "Again and again," Herskovits wrote in his diary, he "emphasized that achievement" was "a function of opportunity, and not of race." When he was told that Africans did have opportunity, he reminded his audience of the strict racial controls imposed by the government.<sup>90</sup> Herskovits told another white group that integration was inevitable, but "whether it was accomplished peacefully or not depended on what the Europeans in Africa did."<sup>91</sup> Another time Herskovits attempted to get an extra copy of a book by a South African author from a university library for the Northwestern library. The librarian told him that they could not give one up because one was for African students and

one for European students. Herskovits reported, "They even took it when I asked whether they were afraid something would rub off if both used the same copy!"<sup>92</sup> He told members of the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (SABRA) that the native areas needed more land "to support the population." When Herskovits tried to get a timetable for change, they refused. To his query about a qualified vote for educated Africans, SABRA officials rejected the possibility due to the potential loss of power for whites. The officials maintained, "Morals and politics don't mix," as they laughed off the morality issue. As a result of his experience in South Africa, Herskovits suggested that the best way to change the racial attitudes of white South Africans was to provide them foundation grants to study in the United States.<sup>93</sup>

In his report to the Senate, Herskovits also criticized American policymakers' treatment of Africa as an object of the Cold War. He recommended that the United States recognize the African preference for a policy of neutrality and not press the Africans to support the West. Such a policy would alienate Africans. Moreover, Herskovits maintained that the United States should not mistake nationalism for Communism. While nationalism was a powerful force in Africa, Herskovits asserted that there was little evidence of Communist infiltration in Africa.<sup>94</sup> In making this statement, Herskovits sought to defuse the belief of conservative policymakers that Communists were plotting a takeover of independent African states.<sup>95</sup> He argued that the best policy for the United States would be to abandon a negative anti-Communism, anti-independence policy and instead embrace a positive policy of support for independence.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Herskovits insisted that American aid programs should be based on "African needs rather than cold war instrumentalities."<sup>97</sup>

Herskovits supported American aid for African economic development but with the important proviso that African development should be based on African values with African involvement in decision-making. The United States "should greatly increase appropriations for African exchanges and educational programs of all kinds" and increase loans and grants for infrastructure, technical assistance, agricultural methods, and health.<sup>98</sup>

Herskovits's report received international recognition with varying reactions. The *New York Times* agreed with Herskovits's argument that African neutrality was good for the West and for Africa.<sup>99</sup> Africans were



generally supportive of Herskovits's recommendations for American policy toward Africa. The Northwestern University newspaper reported that W. Kanyama Chiume, publicity secretary of the nationalist African Congress of Nyasaland, who was then meeting with Herskovits and was "a real live African revolutionary," praised Herskovits's report.<sup>100</sup>

Not surprisingly, Cold Warriors assailed Herskovits's support for African neutrality. One commentator argued that Africa must not be permitted to be neutral since "every defection from the Western camp into non-alignment lessens America's chance of surviving the Communist challenge."<sup>101</sup>

In March 1960 Herskovits testified for about two hours before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee based on his 1959 report.<sup>102</sup> He was impressed by how much more knowledgeable the senators were than in his previous appearance before the committee.<sup>103</sup> In his testimony, Herskovits elaborated on his report in light of recent events, including the independence of a number of African states and the emergence of ethnic conflict in Ruanda, the Congo, and the Cameroons, and he made several recommendations for American policy in Africa. These ethnic conflicts, according to Herskovits, demonstrated that African peoples were determined not to replace European control with control by an "alien indigenous group."<sup>104</sup>

Again, Herskovits recommended that the U.S. government make a clear statement opposing the racial policies of the South African government. He cited contradictory U.S. statements, some calling for increased U.S.–South African cooperation and others criticizing South Africa's racial policies.<sup>105</sup> Herskovits cautioned the United States against joint aid arrangements with the European Economic Community (EEC), as Africans viewed them as evidence of a new economic imperialism by the West. Therefore he recommended support for the "United Nations Special fund for underdeveloped countries," which was not under the control of just a few countries. In general, Herskovits opposed unilateral or bilateral actions in Africa, preferring action under UN auspices.<sup>106</sup> All aid programs should include Africans in the planning and implementation to avoid the imposition of external actions reminiscent of colonialism. Thus economic cooperation should replace economic aid.<sup>107</sup>

Herskovits asserted that in light of recent events, it was now even more imperative that the recommendations in his October 1959 report be implemented. The Congo's imminent independence and develop-

ments in the Cameroons, Togo, South-West Africa, and the Belgian Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi made it more urgent that the United States articulate its own positive policy. The U.S. government should stop associating itself “with multiracial countries whose practices are such that close association with them will handicap us in the current world struggle.” Otherwise, the United States risked alienating Africans. Moreover, African leaders needed to be included in discussions relating to Africa. The United States needed to be sensitive to African positions and, where possible, help resolve conflicts peacefully. Herskovits concluded his testimony by declaring that, however difficult, “the habit of thinking colonially must be given over if the new countries are to be convinced that aid programs are not motivated by concerns of continuing control over their destinies.”<sup>108</sup>

Following Herskovits’s remarks, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Joseph Satterthwaite testified, expressing general agreement with many of Herskovits’s recommendations but disagreeing on some key points. Satterthwaite rejected the notion that African countries could remain outside of Cold War questions. He also resisted Herskovits’s call for set timetables for independence for African colonies. Finally, Satterthwaite criticized Herskovits’s attack on South Africa’s racial policies. The assistant secretary maintained that it would be inappropriate for the U.S. government to require American corporations operating in Africa to repudiate the laws of the country in which they operated, even if those laws required racial discrimination.<sup>109</sup> He told “the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that a government was simply ‘not free to make gratuitous statements on the internal affairs of a foreign country.’”<sup>110</sup> Satterthwaite, a conservative diplomat, also opposed an American “get-tough” policy on South Africa during the Kennedy administration when he served as American ambassador to South Africa.<sup>111</sup>

Less than a week after Herskovits’s testimony and Satterthwaite’s criticism, South African police opened fire on hundreds of black demonstrators who were peacefully protesting the pass laws of the Nationalist regime at Sharpeville. More than sixty were killed and over two hundred wounded. In the wake of the Sharpeville massacre and adverse reaction to Satterthwaite’s remarks, the State Department issued a statement condemning the violent actions of the South African government and affirming the right of peaceful protest. But Herskovits’s policy recommendations on South Africa were not implemented.<sup>112</sup>

In the Eisenhower administration's final year, during which several African countries won their independence, Herskovits continued to speak out on America's policies in Africa. When the Belgians granted independence to the Congo but sought to keep effective control, a monumental crisis ensued. After Congolese troops rebelled against the Belgian troops remaining in the Congo, Belgian paratroopers killed hundreds of the Congolese. Herskovits called for United Nations intervention. The Congolese government, led by President Joseph Kasavubu and Premier Patrice Lumumba, requested American military assistance, but Eisenhower turned down the request and recommended instead that the Congo ask the United Nations for assistance. With American and Soviet support, the UN Security Council authorized a UN peacekeeping force and demanded that Belgian troops withdraw.<sup>113</sup> The Belgians refused and helped the mineral-rich Katanga province, whose mining operations were controlled by a Belgian company, secede from the Congo. Despite the U.S. embassy's reports that the key to resolving the conflict was getting Belgian withdrawal, the Eisenhower administration believed that Lumumba was the cause of the chaos. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director Allen Dulles maintained that the Communists controlled Lumumba.<sup>114</sup> Herskovits, who had visited the Congo in 1955 and 1957, rejected Dulles's view and spoke out in favor of Lumumba.<sup>115</sup> Three months after the beginning of the crisis, Herskovits explained that most West African leaders, "even in Nigeria, base their approach to the [Congo] situation on the question of legitimacy, and this is why they have been supporting Lumumba."<sup>116</sup> In addition, Herskovits dismissed the reports that Lumumba was a Communist. Herskovits believed that the Congo crisis was due in part to the fact that the "Congolese were not prepared for independence when the Belgians left." He opposed unilateral American action, as it "'would be fatal' to this country's standing in Africa." Instead, he supported United Nations action.<sup>117</sup>

Nevertheless, after the Soviets gave material and technical assistance to Lumumba, "Eisenhower apparently ordered his assassination."<sup>118</sup> The CIA and Belgian intelligence masterminded a coup led by Colonel Joseph Mobutu that overthrew Lumumba and ordered the withdrawal of the Soviets. Ultimately, Lumumba was killed after escaping confinement. The conflict between Katanga and the Congo dragged on into 1963 before UN troops finally prevailed and the Congo was reunified.<sup>119</sup>

The Congo crisis reveals the differences between Herskovits's approach to Africa and that of Eisenhower. Eisenhower saw the conflict in the Congo as a Cold War crisis, with Lumumba a dupe for the Soviets. Herskovits, by contrast, viewed Lumumba as a popular nationalist leader who sought independence from the Belgians and reunification of the Congo. Although both Herskovits and the Eisenhower administration supported United Nations intervention, the administration covertly acted to overthrow Lumumba, perhaps prolonging the crisis. Unaware of the CIA's role in the crisis, Herskovits argued that the UN's actions had helped avoid a Congo war that could have become a Cold War battleground. Herskovits believed that the Congo crisis lent support to his view that Africa need not become enmeshed in the larger struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States. Only a misguided policy based on unilateral action would culminate in a Cold War conflict.<sup>120</sup>

The 1960 election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency appeared to present Herskovits with the opportunity for a more influential advisory role. In the Senate, Kennedy had strongly criticized Eisenhower's obsession with Communism in the Middle East and North Africa. Kennedy proposed that a more effective policy toward these regions would focus on nationalism and the inevitable transformation from colonial status to independent states. Moreover, he recommended increased foreign aid to Africa through the creation of an African Education Development Fund.<sup>121</sup>

In December 1960, after Kennedy's victory in the presidential election, Kennedy adviser Robert C. Good asked Herskovits to assist in formulating policy recommendations for sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>122</sup> Herskovits made several recommendations. He advised the new administration to support United Nations control of South-West Africa, which had been under South African control since the end of the First World War. In addition, the United States should stay out of intra-African problems such as territorial disputes. If outside intervention was deemed necessary, it "should be multilateral favoring action by African states." Herskovits also urged the negotiation of international agreements to limit weapon sales to Africa.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, the Kennedy administration authorized covert arms sales to South Africa in 1962 in exchange for American access to land near Pretoria to set up a deep space tracking station. But in August 1963 Kennedy ordered the termination of all weapons sales to South Africa after January 1, 1964.<sup>124</sup>

In March 1961, in a lecture at Michigan State University, Herskovits renewed his criticism of past American policy toward Africa, at the same time applauding a recent speech, entitled “Africa for the Africans,” by the new assistant secretary of state for African affairs, G. Mennen Williams. Herskovits called U.S. policy in Africa during the Eisenhower administration “incredibly naïve,” noting that “at times ‘we have outsmarted ourselves.’” By gearing U.S. policy toward placating NATO allies in Europe and treating Africa as a Cold War battleground, Herskovits insisted that policymakers had fostered policies that were detrimental to Africa and the United States. Herskovits believed that Williams’s speech signaled that the Kennedy administration was moving toward an Africa policy that focused on Africans and not on Europeans and Soviets. Herskovits underlined the fact “that ‘friendship cannot be bought.’” Africans were more interested in “their own values and the dignity of having those values recognized by the powers of the world.” He discounted the Soviet threat in Africa, saying “there is ‘a good chance the Russians may outfumble us in Africa. I feel the Russians are baffled by the Africans.’”<sup>125</sup>

In March 1961 Herskovits expressed his pleasure that his 1959 report on Africa appeared to influence the Kennedy administration’s framework for analyzing events in Africa. Moreover, Herskovits was “hopeful” that U.S. policy toward Africa under Kennedy and the new United Nations ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, would be a marked improvement over that of the Eisenhower administration.<sup>126</sup>

Herskovits’s optimism notwithstanding, the overarching influence of Cold War concerns during the Kennedy administration limited the chances for the development of an Africa-centered policy. This is demonstrated by the fate of the proposed nomination of Herskovits to a seat on the Bureau of African Affairs of the State Department. Herskovits’s opportunity to have a greater impact on America’s Africa policies during the Kennedy administration was hamstrung by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) failure to give him security clearance for the position. In 1961 Special Assistant to the President Kenneth O’Donnell requested an FBI background check on Herskovits. The extensive investigation revealed Herskovits’s membership in “17 cited organizations” that were considered Communist front organizations by the House Un-American Activities Committee and other congressional committees.<sup>127</sup> The cited organizations included the Progressive Citizens of Illinois; a 1940 committee supporting the pardon of John B. McNamara, who was

-serving a life sentence for blowing up the *Los Angeles Times* building thirty years earlier during a labor dispute; and the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions.<sup>128</sup> The FBI continued to periodically investigate Herskovits. For instance, the FBI reported that on June 6, 1962, an agent contacted Herskovits claiming to be a reporter for the *Chicago Maroon*, a student newspaper, in order to find out Herskovits's plans for travel abroad. The call was made after a source advised the FBI that Herskovits planned to travel to Africa and Czechoslovakia.<sup>129</sup> Although he was unable to obtain a presidential-appointed position due to the FBI report, Herskovits did serve on the State Department's Advisory Council on African Affairs, along with about three dozen other scholars, foundation officials, and businesspeople.<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, Herskovits's influence on American policy toward Africa was diminished.

While American policymakers rejected Herskovits's advice, African nationalists expressed appreciation for his consistent support for African self-determination. In 1960 Herskovits was an honored guest at the Nigerian independence ceremonies. The same year, Senegal's president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, praised Herskovits to the American ambassador for his contributions to helping Americans understand Africans. As an expression of gratitude, the following year Senghor invited Herskovits to the first anniversary celebrations of independence in Senegal.<sup>131</sup> In 1962 Herskovits attended Uganda's independence celebrations, which particularly pleased him because one of his former students was minister of education there.<sup>132</sup>

In his last major work, *The Human Factor in Changing Africa*, published in 1962, Herskovits summed up his view of the history, culture, politics, and economics of sub-Saharan Africa. Herskovits brought to this work a lifetime's experience in grappling with the issue of cultural change in Africa. Moreover, since the Second World War the anthropologist had broadened his interests to embrace the totality of the African experience. He had traveled extensively in Africa during the postwar era, visiting the continent in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1960, and 1961.<sup>133</sup> These trips combined Herskovits's two major postwar interests, promoting Northwestern's Program of African Studies and continuing his ongoing study of African cultures and cultural change. Herskovits's final book represented the sum total of his long-held views on Africa and cultural change. His thesis was that present-day cultures and societies in Africa represented the result of a long-term dynamic process of inter-

action between indigenous cultures and external influences. Indeed, his 1960 trip had impressed him with the “increasing reassertion of African culture,” a development that differed from the popular view that traditional beliefs were being abandoned with the increasing influence of Western culture.<sup>134</sup> Herskovits maintained that cultural change in Africa followed “a universal mechanism of cultural change” called acculturation. He described this dynamic as follows: “[W]henver peoples having different customs come together, they modify their ways by taking over something from those with whom they newly meet. They may take over much or little, according to the nature and intensity of the contact, or the degree to which the two cultures have elements in common, or differ in basic orientations. But they never take over or ignore all; some change is inevitable.”<sup>135</sup>

In *The Human Factor*, Herskovits surveyed African physical types, culture areas, history, education, religion, the arts, economics, and politics. The strength of the book is its emphasis on the impact of change on various institutions and its argument that one cannot expect traditional African culture to melt away in the face of Western cultural, economic, and political influences. Instead, Africans were willing “to accept change when it is demonstrated that this is to their advantage, and when changes do not involve too radical a departure from established canons of social organization, beliefs and modes of behavior.”<sup>136</sup> For example, Africans preferred secular schools to missionary schools, as they were less likely to have their cultures denigrated there.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, as a result of the “long history of racial discrimination and its resulting tensions,” Africans often suspected the worst when confronted with Western advice. Therefore Africans needed to be convinced that European or American projects would be advantageous to them.<sup>138</sup> Critics generally applauded Herskovits’s thesis on the dynamism of cultural change.<sup>139</sup> Herskovits argued that, in various aspects of life, Africans accepted some external influences while rejecting others. Africans, like other peoples, reinterpreted traditional practices when confronted with change to form cultural syncretisms that contained aspects of the new and the old.<sup>140</sup> In religion, Africans accepted some aspects of Christianity and Islam but often continued to hold to their traditional beliefs as well.<sup>141</sup> Herskovits rejected the view that when Africans migrated to cities, they went through a process of detribalization. Instead, Herskovits cited extensive evidence that dem-

onstrated that Africans maintained their loyalty to tribal roots when they became urban dwellers.<sup>142</sup>

Similarly, in his discussion of African nationalist movements and politics in the independent states, Herskovits described the interaction between traditional institutions and modern influences. He attributed the rise of African nationalist movements to multiple causes, including increased European education, political experience in colonial administrations, pride in precolonial African states, loyalty to traditional African cultures, and the desire to express those values.<sup>143</sup> Herskovits also argued that the development of one-party systems in most states was influenced by traditional patterns and by the perceived success of one-party Communist states in pursuing rapid economic development.<sup>144</sup>

In his concluding chapter, Herskovits argued that three main forces contributed to the African search for values: traditional African culture (in human relations and creative arts), North American and European influences arising from the colonial era (technology, literacy, modern medicine), and, more recently, influences from Communist countries (the one-party state as a way of mobilizing maximum resources), India, and the Near East.<sup>145</sup> Traditional values became “the integrative element binding the old and the new.”<sup>146</sup> African responses to change varied. The Masai of East Africa evidenced “cultural rigidity,” as their needs were completely satisfied by their pastoral lifestyle. Thus they rejected Western ways. By contrast, the Nigerian Ibos, whose culture emphasized individual decision-making based on opportunities for success, were very open to changes that would maximize individual opportunity. Most African cultures responded to Western influences somewhere in between the extreme examples of the Masai and the Ibos. Moreover, Herskovits argued that since most Africans were born into a world of African and European influences, a new “unified tradition” was already in place.<sup>147</sup>

While Herskovits’s final book effectively made the argument for the strength of traditional African cultures and the inevitability of change in which Africans would choose from various cultural choices, the work was marred by several shortcomings. Herskovits failed to confront many of Africa’s problems. By focusing on all of sub-Saharan Africa through the theme of cultural change, Herskovits omitted analyses of specific cultures, peoples, colonies, and states. Specific analyses would probably have led Herskovits to produce greater insights into political and ethnic conflict, the question of one-party states, tensions with present and for-



mer colonial powers, and problems of economic development.<sup>148</sup> In one case of relying on an outmoded analysis, Herskovits divided Africa into six cultural areas, based on his 1930 article. The generalizations employed in this analysis obscured some of the cultural complexity in different geographic regions. Furthermore, by emphasizing the agency of Africans in making cultural choices, Herskovits underestimated the role of power in limiting choice. He did allude to this, for instance, noting that urban migration was in part caused by economic coercion. Individuals were forced to leave subsistence farming to earn money in the cities to pay taxes imposed by the state. In this connection, it is interesting that Herskovits devoted a significant section of the book to the mobilization of labor for industry. He discussed this issue in the context of traditional resistance to industrial discipline but did not question the assumption that industrialization and change from traditional work styles were desirable.<sup>149</sup> Herskovits, who was friendly with a number of African leaders, may have been influenced by their support for economic development programs including new technologies, medical care, large development projects, modern communications, and transportation as the way to economic independence.<sup>150</sup>

A few months after the publication of his final book, Herskovits flew to Africa for the last time and gave a plenary address at the First International Congress of Africanists in Accra, Ghana. He was particularly pleased that this congress represented an organization that was African and therefore constituted “a validation of the importance of their cultures in the world scene.” He was also happy to report that he was able to win his point that the congress would be controlled by scholars and not by governments, as the Soviets wanted.<sup>151</sup> Thus less than two months before his death, Herskovits was optimistic that the significance of his life’s work — which emphasized the dynamism and strength of African cultures, the advance of African studies, and the necessity for pursuing scholarly endeavors in an environment conducive to objective research — was achieving global recognition.

Nevertheless, the political environment in which the tremendous advances in African studies were made continued to privilege Cold War calculations above the needs of Africans. The Kennedy administration’s rhetorical support for African nationalist movements and African neutrality was not generally matched by its actions. Although Kennedy’s policies did represent a change from those of Eisenhower, Cold War

strategy remained paramount. American involvement in Africa increased with higher levels of economic and military aid given to the continent. But this aid was designed to make sure that pro-Western leaders would head African governments, regardless of the impact these leaders would have on their own countries. For example, the Kennedy administration established a military aid mission in the Congo in 1963 that worked with the American embassy and the local CIA station to help place a pro-American leader in power. This was achieved in 1965 when Joseph Mobutu came to power with U.S. assistance following a coup d'état. Despite the corrupt and brutal nature of Mobutu's government, for over twenty-five years the United States continued its support based on Cold War strategy. Similarly, in 1962 the Kennedy administration supported Portugal, a NATO ally, in voting in the United Nations on issues involving Portugal's African colonies. Thus American foreign policy often supported corrupt dictators and opposed African self-determination.<sup>152</sup>

In the final analysis, Herskovits's hope for an American policy on Africa that emphasized African needs was not fulfilled. Although it is impossible to know how Africa's history would have changed had American policy been different, it is no secret that the continent's economic and political development was retarded by Cold War maneuvers. Numerous dictatorships were propped up by American, Soviet, or Chinese military support. The militarization of African states slowed economic development and contributed to the expansion of ethnic and regional wars. NATO military aid helped Portugal delay the formation of independent states in Angola and Mozambique. In South Africa, Western support extended white supremacy rule.<sup>153</sup> Herskovits's warnings about the dangers of subordinating African needs to Cold War calculations proved all too accurate.



# Epilogue

When the big cotton tree falls, the little goat eats its leaves. — Haitian Proverb

If my world's black and yours is white

How the hell could we think alike.

— Sister Souljah

**M**ELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS died of a heart attack on February 25, 1963.<sup>1</sup> Born into a world that devalued Africans and African Americans and their cultures, Herskovits devoted his life to the idea that all cultures have worth and to discovering the dynamism and strength of African and African American societies. He supported African self-determination in the midst of colonialism. He worked to establish African American and African studies as legitimate disciplines in American higher education. His work empowered African diasporic peoples and served to undermine ideas that supported white supremacy and European colonialism. He helped usher in a world in which African peoples would be accorded the dignity they deserved. And the work goes on. As historian Henry Adams said, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”<sup>2</sup> Sociologist St. Clair Drake remarked in 1988 that Herskovits himself believed that his studies’ relevance was expansive, saying, “they would enter into firmament.”<sup>3</sup> Drake added, “[Y]ou can’t control the ferment once it gets going, you see. But the ferment did come.”<sup>4</sup> Although Drake was referring to Herskovits’s research into black cultures, his statement was equally true for Herskovits’s ideas on cultural relativism and his work in building the disciplines of African and African American studies. Herskovits’s intellectual and institutional contributions in all these areas have clearly entered into that firmament, with the controversial issues he discussed omnipresent, his ideas as relevant as ever.

## *Epilogue*

In the four decades since Herskovits's death, the issues that engaged his attention have assumed great prominence in public debate. Moreover, the tension between cultural particularism and universalism that was present in his work has emerged as a driving force behind debates about race and culture. The 1960s witnessed the reemergence of the earlier argument between Frazier and Herskovits on the nature of black culture and the question of pathology in black culture. Was black culture unique or a pathological distortion of mainstream American (white) culture? The reemergence of a strong black nationalist movement in the latter stages of the civil rights movement reinvigorated popular and scholarly emphasis on black culture and history. The idea that elements of African culture had influenced the life and thought of African Americans gained a new respectability "with the rise of Black Power rhetoric, the questioning of the assimilationist ethic, and the new interest in the distinctive aspects of the culture of the black working class."<sup>5</sup> Many intellectuals and activists now spoke out in support of Herskovits's interpretation of black culture. Indeed, his conclusion about the African influence on American and African American culture has been redeemed by the scholarship of the last twenty-five years. Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1977), for instance, "served as a brilliant demonstration of the validity of what Herskovits wrote" about the connections between African and African American culture.<sup>6</sup>

The 1965 publication by the U.S Department of Labor of its report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, engendered a huge public controversy on the nature of black culture. Moynihan's report, based in part on the writings of Frazier and Myrdal, blamed the pathological matriarchal black family for many of the problems of blacks.<sup>7</sup> With the rise of the Black Power movement and black cultural nationalism in the mid-1960s, the position taken by the Myrdal and the Moynihan studies and their proponents came under widespread attack, and the Herskovits position was embraced. Like Herskovits, critics of the Moynihan study argued that if black family life and culture deviated from white culture, it meant that it was different but organized in its own way, based in part on the African influence. It was not a pathological or distorted version of white culture. The critics emphasized the positive attributes of black culture and African culture.<sup>8</sup> Many of Moynihan's critics, including black sociologists Joyce Ladner and An-

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drew Billingsley, either invoked Herskovits's work, notably *The Myth of the Negro Past*, or similar ideas about the strength of black cultural institutions, including nontraditional families.<sup>9</sup> Billingsley, supporting the Herskovits view of black culture, has observed "that the history and the heritage of the African-American people does not begin or end with slavery."<sup>10</sup> Adverse reaction to the Moynihan report on the black family inspired many scholars to challenge the idea that black families were pathological institutions. Notable in this respect was historian Herbert G. Gutman, whose *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (1976) demonstrated the fundamental historic health of the black family.<sup>11</sup>

Herskovits's thesis in *The Myth of the Negro Past* that knowledge of African cultures would increase African Americans' self-respect also achieved significant resonance during the 1960s and 1970s. Black nationalists, including the Black Panthers, invoked Herskovits's ideas about black culture.<sup>12</sup> Jean Herskovits recently recalled that while teaching African history at City College of New York during the late 1960s, many black radicals, wearing Afros and dark sunglasses, walked into her classes with copies of Herskovits's *Myth of the Negro Past*. They read the book not because she had assigned it but because it was in part a manifesto for their black cultural nationalism.<sup>13</sup> Black nationalists used Herskovits's ideas about black cultural distinctiveness to reject the notion of integration, arguing instead that black culture was the basis for black political independence.<sup>14</sup> Herskovits's view that increased pride in black culture and heritage would lead to increased self-respect was confirmed as "[b]lack experts watched the transformation from self-hate to health."<sup>15</sup> The Herskovits argument that the dissemination of more accurate knowledge about African culture and African American culture would increase whites' respect for blacks is mirrored today by prominent intellectuals. Recently, Henry Louis Gates Jr. remarked on one of the reasons that he produced a television series on African history and culture. "I don't think you change attitudes overnight," Gates said. "I don't think watching 'The Cosby Show' made David Dukes less racist, but I do think that having African achievement and the triumphs of African civilization in a curriculum — subliminally, that affects racial attitudes."<sup>16</sup>

New historical and anthropological studies confirmed the African cultural influence on whites as well as blacks but did not negate the influence of slavery and oppression during the post-Civil War era. In 1969 historian C. Vann Woodward stated that "so far as their culture is con-

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cerned, all Americans are part Negro.”<sup>17</sup> Decades earlier, Herskovits had made similar arguments, based on his acculturation studies, in *The Myth of the Negro Past* and in “What Has Africa Given America?” In 1992 two prominent anthropologists, Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, confirmed the significance of the African influence in the Americas based on their own research and their knowledge of contemporary research on the subject.<sup>18</sup> Three years later Shelley Fisher Fishkin reported that during the previous five years, over a hundred publications established the interconnectedness between black culture and white culture.<sup>19</sup>

While Herskovits’s position on the African influence is widely accepted, more sophisticated anthropological studies of African and African American cultures, while confirming the African cultural influence in America, have also modified some of the particulars of Herskovits’s argument. Anthropologists now accept the diversity of West African cultures, negating Herskovits’s argument for a relatively homogeneous culture area of West Africa. On the other hand, Mintz and Price support Herskovits’s search for underlying values, such as interpersonal style, beliefs about causality, and attitudes about sociocultural change, as important in attempting to define an African cultural heritage.<sup>20</sup>

Herskovits’s emphasis on survivals has also been criticized. Lawrence Levine rejected the use of the term “survival” because it implied that African cultural elements were merely “quaint reminders of an exotic culture sufficiently alive to render the slaves picturesquely different but little more.” Levine emphasized the changing nature of culture and argued that African cultural elements played a central part in the creation and transformation of African American culture.<sup>21</sup> Of course, despite his use of the word “survival,” Herskovits also stressed the dynamic nature of culture. Indeed, as we have seen, he employed the term “reinterpretation” to explain how Trinidadians transformed African and European cultural elements based on their circumstances and needs in Trinidad.<sup>22</sup>

The renewed interest in black culture and history inspired by the civil rights movement led to the formation of black studies and African American studies programs at many universities. Herskovits had tried in vain to establish such a program at Northwestern, with his unsuccessful applications during the 1940s and 1950s. During the late 1960s numerous universities created black studies programs and departments in “direct response to strikes and other student demonstrations,” particularly after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>23</sup> The *Journal of Black Studies*

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began publishing in 1970. Black studies programs have proliferated over the years. During the early 1980s the National Council for Black Studies reported that there were 525 black studies programs, and 150 of these were black studies departments.<sup>24</sup> In 1994 there were 152 black studies programs at American colleges and universities that offered bachelor's degrees, 13 that offered master's degrees, and 2 that offered doctoral programs.<sup>25</sup> Temple University, which established the "nation's first doctoral program in African-American studies . . . has produced 42 Ph.D.'s."<sup>26</sup>

Herskovits's controversial role in seeking to control the direction of Negro studies during the 1930s and 1940s based on a vision of detached scholarship has been paralleled by the contemporary debate over the nature and control of black studies. With the formation of black studies programs in the 1960s, many black scholars insisted that they, rather than white scholars, should control the discipline. Moreover, the 1960s' programs, unlike Herskovits's proposed program, often had an express political purpose. They were designed to liberate black people from colonial attitudes. In 1970 Nathan Hare asserted, "Black studies will be revolutionary or it will be useless if not detrimental."<sup>27</sup> Vincent Harding, "who sought to create at the Institute of the Black World a center that he hoped would shape the future of the black studies curricula . . . wrote, 'We seek for control of our own story.'<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, black students often refused to be taught by white teachers in black history classes.<sup>29</sup> Recently, the question of activist scholarship was debated in the *New York Times* by two leading scholars of black studies, Manning Marable, director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University, and Henry Louis Gates Jr.<sup>30</sup> Marable asserted that black studies departments ought to "utilize history and culture as tools by which an oppressed people can transform their lives and the entire society. Scholars have an obligation not just to interpret, but to act."<sup>31</sup> By contrast, Gates took a position closer to that of Herskovits. While acknowledging that "the ideal of wholly disinterested scholarship . . . will probably remain an elusive one," Gates insisted that it should still be the fundamental reason for research. Scholarship should not be required to have "immediate political utility."<sup>32</sup>

Herskovits also left an enduring legacy in African studies. The discipline has expanded over the years, building on the foundations laid by Herskovits and other pioneers. Recently, anthropologist Sally Falk Moore declared Herskovits the prime mover behind African studies in



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the United States.<sup>33</sup> Today, African studies flourishes. The African Studies Association (ASA) boasted over 3,000 members during the mid-1990s, with annual conferences averaging 600 papers and 2,000 scholars typically in attendance.<sup>34</sup> And the program that Herskovits began at Northwestern continues to thrive. Today, Northwestern's Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies boasts "the finest Africana library in North America if not the world," with "more than 245,000 volumes, 2,800 current serials, 300 current African newspapers."<sup>35</sup>

Just as in black studies programs, racial politics in African studies has caused controversy and division. During the late 1960s and 1970s black scholars criticized African studies programs for their antiblack bias. Historian Sterling Stuckey asserted that "the number of Afro-Americans in African Studies programs across the country is criminally small. . . . The number of Africans and Afro-Americans teaching in African Studies programs, of course, is smaller still."<sup>36</sup> Black scholars attacked the ASA for limiting the presence and decision-making roles of black scholars and for failing to make the discipline responsive to the needs of people of African descent.<sup>37</sup> The ASA established a committee of black and white scholars and made recommendations for increasing black participation in the ASA. In 1969 the ASA's Black Caucus formed the African Heritage Studies Association (AHTSA). At the annual conference that year in Montreal, the AHTSA demanded equal African (meaning African and African American) and European representation on the ASA executive board. Many white scholars resented the designation of African Americans as Africans.<sup>38</sup> Following the ASA's refusal to "concede a conspicuous role for AHTSA members on decision-making committees, and . . . [to] award them an appreciable number of research fellowships," the AHTSA members decided to separate from the ASA.<sup>39</sup> This conflict led to almost twenty years of "insularity" from major foundations and African studies programs. In 1985 the AHTSA was invited to return to the ASA.<sup>40</sup>

Debates about the virtues or vices of cultural relativism, cultural pluralism, and cultural pluralism's modern correlate, multiculturalism, are as controversial today as they were in Herskovits's day. Indeed, the intellectual discourse of the 1990s on multiculturalism, cultural diversity, African American culture, and American culture recalls many of Herskovits's ideas. The issues that Herskovits engaged about the nature of African and African American cultures and the virtues of cultural relativism resemble the raging debates over identity politics and multiculturalism.

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Just as Herskovits's work straddled notions of particularism — emphasizing the strength of African cultures and African American cultures — and universalism — emphasizing the fundamental humanity of all cultures — so today do contemporary commentators struggle with these same issues. Multiculturalism, defined by sociologist Todd Gitlin as the “demand for the respect for differences,” corresponds with Herskovits's definition of cultural relativism, that is, respect for mutual differences.<sup>41</sup> Just as Herskovits's embrace of cultural relativism enraged critics during the 1940s, so, too, do supporters of multiculturalism inspire opposition today. For instance, Gitlin recently lamented the overemphasis on multiculturalism and identity politics, which he defined as “the recognition of a collective hurt, followed by the mistaking of a group position for a ‘culture,’ followed by the mistaking of a ‘culture’ for a politics.”<sup>42</sup> Gitlin argued that identity politics caused a fragmentation of the political left into various cultural groups concerned with their own group based on ethnicity, race, gender, or sexual orientation. He concluded, “What is a Left without a commons, even a hypothetical one? If there is no people, but only peoples, there is no Left.”<sup>43</sup>

Like Gitlin, conservative commentator Dinesh D'Souza has attacked multiculturalism. But unlike Gitlin, who hopes to unify liberals who are divided by cultural politics, D'Souza blames liberal relativists for society's problems. In a recent best-seller, D'Souza called cultural relativism a disaster for blacks in America today. He argued that this concept “prevents liberals from dealing with the nation's contemporary crisis.” D'Souza claimed that the main problem for blacks was their “civilizational breakdown that . . . is especially concentrated among the black underclass.”<sup>44</sup> According to D'Souza, relativism prevents any attack on the pathologies of poor blacks. Indeed, D'Souza identified Herskovits as one of the demon liberals who had articulated this relativist perspective that had done so much damage. D'Souza's argument looks back to the Victorian era's belief in racial and cultural hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> If he were alive today, Herskovits would probably be pained by the fact that D'Souza's work enjoyed such popularity.

In response to D'Souza, Herskovits would argue that there cannot be a valid oneness without a recognition of, and a respect for, difference. The interplay between unity and diversity is an ongoing process. There are periods in which social transformations lead to unified notions of society, and then there are periods of differentiation. Herskovits's life-

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work emphasized both tendencies; he never fully reconciled the two. In his work on physical anthropology and cultural anthropology, he sought to undermine notions of racial and cultural hierarchy. By doing so, he embraced the universal notion that all cultures were entitled to respect and that none were inherently better than others. Herskovits's studies of African and African American cultures emphasized the dynamism and strength of these cultures. In an era that devalued black cultures, he sought to correct the tendency to place white cultures above all others. In this work, he emphasized cultural differences. Furthermore, his philosophy of cultural relativism emphasized the differences among cultures. Values were culture-bound, and therefore universal rights were untenable. At the same time, he stressed tolerance of cultural differences as a universal value.

The tension in Herskovits's work between universal values and cultural particularism has also resounded in international politics. With the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) under attack from developing nations on the charge of ethnocentrism, Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently defended the UDHR in words that might easily have been uttered by Herskovits. Speaking on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the UDHR, Annan asserted that tolerance was a global value. He insisted, "Tolerance promoted, protected and enshrined will ensure all freedoms. Without it we can be certain of none. . . . Human rights are the expression of those traditions of tolerance in all cultures that are the basis of peace and progress." Annan added, as Herskovits might have said, "There is no single model of democracy or of human rights or of cultural expression for all the world." Trying to marry universal values with particularism, Annan continued, "But for all the world, there must be democracy, human rights, and free cultural expression." Thus the secretary-general concluded, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, far from insisting on uniformity, is the basic condition for global diversity. . . . We celebrate a victory for tolerance, diversity and pluralism. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a global bulwark against all systems and all ideologies that would suppress our distinctness and our humanity. Diversity no less than dignity is essential to the human condition."<sup>46</sup>

In his final state of the union address, President William J. Clinton recalled a meeting with a prominent geneticist who told him that all hu-

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mans have a genetic code that is 99.9 percent the same. “Modern science has confirmed what ancient faiths have always taught: the most important fact of life is our common humanity. Therefore, we should do more than just tolerate our diversity. We should honor it and celebrate it,” asserted the president.<sup>47</sup> Herskovits could not have said it better.



# Notes

## Introduction

1. West, "New Cultural Politics," 93.
2. For example, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., longtime liberal historian and former adviser to President John F. Kennedy, wrote *The Disuniting of America*.
3. Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*, 148.
4. See D'Souza, *Illiberal Education*. For an insightful critique of D'Souza's selective use of evidence, see Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*, 172–75.
5. Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*, 228.
6. Stavenhagen, "Cultural Rights."
7. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 653.
8. Mintz, introduction to *Myth of the Negro Past*, ix.
9. Ford, *Black Studies*, 52; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 7–8. In history, the leader of this movement was Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and publisher of the *Journal of Negro History*. W. E. B. Du Bois made signal contributions in both sociology and history. Black colleges led the effort to teach black studies courses, with the first black history courses appearing in the 1910s.
10. Mintz, "In Memoriam," 50.
11. The dissenters included E. Franklin Frazier, Alain Locke, Guy Johnson, and Gunnar Myrdal.
12. "The British Broadcasting Corporation, London, England, America To-Day: The Negro (from a recording), June 22, 1937, Report: 'The Negro in the United States,' by Melville J. Herskovits," Box 4, Melville J. Herskovits Papers, University Archives, Northwestern University Library, Evanston IL (hereafter cited as MJH-NU).
13. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*.
14. Baron, "Africa in the Americas."
15. Jackson, "Melville Herskovits."
16. Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 134–42; Harris, "Segregation and Scholarship."
17. Cole, *Conversations*, 22.
18. Cole, *Conversations*, 18–22.

1. The Making of an Anthropologist

1. Coben, *Rebellion against Victorianism*, 1–35.
2. Singal, *War Within*, 5–8.
3. Herskovits, “When Is a Jew a Jew?” 114–15; Jean Herskovits, interview by the author, April 2, 1999, notes in the author’s possession.
4. “Diary of Mrs. Henrietta (Hart) Herskovits, 1902–1906,” Box 1, Melville J. Herskovits Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York (hereafter cited as MJH-SC); “Security Investigation Data Form, Sensitive Position, 1959–1960, Atomic Energy Commission Form,” n.d., Box 2, MJH-SC.
5. Sorin, *A Time for Building*, 10.
6. “Diary of Mrs. Henrietta (Hart) Herskovits.”
7. Undated News Clippings, Box 1, MJH-SC.
8. Undated News Clippings, Box 1, MJH-SC.
9. “Diary of Mrs. Henrietta (Hart) Herskovits.”
10. Herskovits, interview.
11. Herskovits, “When Is a Jew a Jew?” 114–15.
12. Herskovits, “When Is a Jew a Jew?” 115.
13. Herskovits, “When Is a Jew a Jew?” 114–15.
14. Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*, 25–32.
15. Herskovits, interview.
16. Herskovits, “When Is a Jew a Jew?” 114–15.
17. “Thirty-Two Pass Try-Out Exams,” *Les Beaux Jours*, Poitiers, France, March 29, 1919, Box 1, MJH-SC.
18. Herskovits, interview; “Official Transcript of the Record of Melville Jean Herskovits,” University of Cincinnati, MJH-SC.
19. Melville J. Herskovits Transcript, University of Chicago, June 15, 1920, MJH-SC.
20. Melville Herskovits to Herman Herskovits (father), February 7, 1920, Box 1, MJH-SC.
21. Herskovits, “Letter to Rabbi [Horace J.] Wolf,” *American Jewish Review*, March 27, 1920, Box 36, MJH-SC.
22. Bender, *New York Intellect*, 289; Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 84–86.
23. Herskovits, “Letter to the Editor,” (University of Chicago) *Daily Maroon*, May 27, 1920, Box 36, MJH-SC.
24. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 9–10, 15–16.
25. Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 8, 153, 155, 164; Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 16.
26. Leuchtenberg, *Perils of Prosperity*, 141–44.
27. Cressman, *A Golden Journey*, 96–100. Cressman, Margaret Mead’s first husband, was a friend of Herskovits’s at Columbia.
28. Rutkoff and Scott, *New School*, xii, 2, 22, 26.

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29. Herskovits, "Letter to the Editor," *Freeman*, December 1, 1920; Herskovits, "Letter to Rabbi Wolf"; Herskovits to Charlotte Herskovits (sister), November 10, 1919, Box 1; all in MJH-SC; Rice, *Margaret Mead*, 42–43.
30. Herskovits, "Mediocrite Jusqu'a La Fin!" (letter to editor), *Freeman*, December 8, 1920, Box 36, MJH-SC.
31. Leuchtenberg, *Perils of Prosperity*, 151–53; "Security Investigation Data Form." On the IWW, see Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*.
32. Boas, "Changes in Bodily Form"; Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 130–32.
33. Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker*, 138.
34. Herskovits, "An Inquiry," 124.
35. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 455.
36. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 2–3; Jackson, "Melville Herskovits," 99–100; "Security Investigation Data Form."
37. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 3.
38. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 2; Jackson, "Melville Herskovits," 99; Herskovits, "Significance of Thorstein Veblen."
39. Herskovits, *Franz Boas*, 22.
40. Lowie was a prominent anthropologist, Ogburn, a prominent sociologist. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 2–3.
41. Darnell, *Invisible Genealogies*, 35.
42. Darnell, *And Along Came Boas*, 274.
43. Boas, *Mind of Primitive Man*, 20.
44. Cole, *Franz Boas*, 273–74; Boas, *Mind of Primitive Man*, 173–79; Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 230.
45. Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, 170–200; Gossett, *Race*, 144–55; Willis, "Skeletons," 121–24; Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*, 252–54, 270–71.
46. Gossett, *Race*, 69–70.
47. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 325; Gossett, *Race*, 76.
48. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 99; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 16.
49. Gossett, *Race*, 76–77.
50. Broca quoted in Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 83.
51. Broca quoted in Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 83–84.
52. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 88–96.
53. Gossett, *Race*, 78–79.
54. Willis quoted in Patterson, *Social History of Anthropology*, 45.
55. Hyatt, *Franz Boas*, x, 42–44, 85.
56. Cole, *Franz Boas*, 57–60, 84.
57. Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land*, xv–xvi.
58. Lewis, "Parallels and Divergences," 23–25.
59. Hyatt, *Franz Boas*, 85; Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land*, 142–49.
60. Frank, "Jews," 740. Mandelbaum did his undergraduate work at Northwestern University from 1928 to 1932. He later received his Ph.D. in anthropol-



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- ogy from Yale University. Herskovits's lectures influenced his decision to study anthropology. Hockings, forward to *Dimensions of Social Life*, v.
61. Mead to MJH, May 19, 1925, Box 13, MJH-NU.
  62. Herskovits, "When Is a Jew a Jew?" 115; Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land*, 100–101.
  63. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 194–233, 270–72, 323–24; Gossett, *Race*, 353–54.
  64. Coben, *Rebellion against Victorianism*, 57–58; Herskovits, *Franz Boas*, 39–42; Boas, "Changes in the Bodily Form." In 1937 two researchers reanalyzed Boas's findings from his head-form studies and concluded that differences from parents to children were due to observer discrepancies. Allen, "Franz Boas's Physical Anthropology," 83. Nonetheless, the totality of Boas's work and that of others, including Herskovits, undercut the view of the racial determinists.
  65. Ruth E. Mugnaini, Los Angeles State College, to MJH, March 13, 1961, MJH to Mugnaini, April 24, 1961, Box 93, MJH-NU.
  66. Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 11.
  67. Baker, *From Savage to Negro*, 121–25.
  68. Ruth E. Mugnaini, Los Angeles State College, to MJH, March 13, 1961, MJH to Mugnaini, April 24, 1961, Box 93, MJH-NU.
  69. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex," 633–64; "American Africanologist," *West Africa* (October 27, 1962): 1181, Box 73, MJH-SC. Many anthropology dissertations from this period were based on secondary sources, with no fieldwork. Murphy, "Introduction," 4.
  70. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 108–11; Freed and Freed, "Clark Wissler," 804, 810–14.
  71. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex," 249.
  72. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex," 272.
  73. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex," 361–62, 373.
  74. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex," 633–34.
  75. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex," 635–39.
  76. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex," 640–41, 646–47.
  77. Herskovits, "Preliminary Consideration of the Culture Areas of Africa," 50–63; Herskovits, "Culture Areas of Africa," 59–77.
  78. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 228–29; Cole, *Franz Boas*, 131–32.
  79. Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 8–12.
  80. Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 8–12.

## 2. The Attack on Pseudoscientific Racism

1. Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity*, 205–9; Coben, *Rebellion against Victorianism*, 136–37.

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2. Stocking, “Scientific Reaction,” 297; see also 289.
3. Stocking, “Scientific Reaction,” 270–307.
4. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 66–71, 111–12. On the origins of the NRC, see Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 41–50.
5. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 112–13.
6. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 92–95.
7. Stocking, “Ideas and Institutions,” 12.
8. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 300.
9. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 67–71; Herskovits, *American Negro*; Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 300; Howard, *Margaret Mead*, 68–70; Mintz, introduction to *Myth of the Negro Past*, xii; Boas to the Fellowship Committee of the NRC, December 9, 1926 (supporting Klineberg application), Reel 27, Franz Boas Papers, Microfilm Edition, Duke University, Durham NC (hereafter cited as Boas Papers).
10. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 300.
11. MJH, NRC Fellowship Application, ca. April 10, 1923, Box 14, MJH-NU; Herskovits, *American Negro*, 22–28, 45–50.
12. Loring (Pruette Fryer) to MJH, November 5, 1923?, Box 8, MJH-NU.
13. Stocking, “Ideas and Institutions,” 12–13.
14. MJH, NRC Fellowship Application, ca. April 10, 1923, Box 14, MJH-NU; Herskovits, *American Negro*, 22–28, 45–50.
15. Gossett, *Race*, 48–50.
16. Gossett, *Race*, 150–51.
17. Chase, *Legacy of Malthus*, 174–75.
18. F. R. L. [Frank R. Lillie], “Plans for European Study of M. J. Herskovits,” n.d., International Education Board Papers, Series 1.3, Box 51, Folder 783, Rockefeller Archive Center, North Tarrytown NY (hereafter cited as IEB Papers).
19. F. R. L., “Plans for European Study of M. J. Herskovits.”
20. F. R. L., “Plans for European Study of M. J. Herskovits.” While in Europe, Herskovits attended and addressed the International Anthropological Congress in the Hague, Netherlands, “on the American negro.” “Erie Graduate Attends Foreign Conference,” no newspaper name, n.d. [ca. 1925], Box 18, MJH-NU.
21. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 112.
22. F. R. Lillie, Chairman, Board of National Research Fellowships in the Biological Sciences, NRC, to MJH, April 28, 1923, Box 14, MJH-NU; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 68, 112–13.
23. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 3–4.
24. Tozzer to Boas, May 4, 1924, Reel 25, Boas Papers.
25. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 112–13.

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26. Lillie, NRC, to MJH, May 1, 1925, Edith Elliot, NRC, to MJH, June 3, 1925, Box 14, MJH-NU.
27. Sadie M. Peterson to Boas, October 9, 1923, Peterson to Boas, n.d., circa December 1923, Reel 24, Boas Papers; Herskovits, *Anthropometry of the Negro*, xiv, 80.
28. MJH Diaries, 1922–1924, Box 4, MJH-SC. Some of the prominent people Herskovits met agreed to be subjects of the study and underwent all the measurements. One example was J. Rosamond Johnson, composer, concert pianist, and playwright, as well as the brother of NAACP official James Weldon Johnson. Form F1 for J. Rosamond Johnson, July 9, 1926, Box 149, MJH-NU.
29. Herskovits and Boas sought the help of Carter G. Woodson, founder and president of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), in identifying and funding Negro students to help in the measurement project. Woodson to MJH, June 16, 1923, Woodson to MJH, July 3, 1923, Woodson to MJH, August 10, 1923, Woodson to MJH, September 14, 1923, Woodson to MJH, September 29, 1923, Box 11, MJH-NU; Woodson to Boas, May 15, 1924, Reel 25, Boas Papers.
30. MJH to Roger Baldwin, July 10, 1925, Box 3, MJH-NU.
31. Locke to MJH, April 14, 1924, Box 13, MJH-NU; MJH to Boas, March 3, 1925, Reel 25, Boas Papers; Boas to Woodson, November 18, 1926, Woodson to Boas, November 19, 1926, Woodson to Boas, November 23, 1926, Reel 27, Boas Papers. All four assistants were cited in the preface to Herskovits's *The American Negro*.
32. Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston*, 63.
33. MJH to Durkee, January 5, 1925, Box 7, MJH-NU.
34. MJH to Locke, February 1, 1924, MJH to Locke, March 10, 1924, Box 164, Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington DC (hereafter cited as Locke Papers). Charles S. Johnson, editor of *Opportunity*, apparently introduced Locke to Herskovits in January 1924. Johnson to MJH, January 8, 1924, Box 17, MJH-NU.
35. MJH to Todd, January 6, 1924, Box 24, MJH-NU.
36. MJH to Durkee, January 5, 1925, Durkee to MJH, January 9, 1925, MJH to Durkee, January 13, 1925, Box 7, MJH-NU.
37. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 274–75; MJH to Locke, January 5, 1925, Locke to MJH, ca. January 16, 1925, MJH to Locke, January 12, 1925, Box 13, MJH-NU. Moens, *Towards Perfect Man*.
38. MJH to Durkee, January 5, 1925, Durkee to MJH, January 9, 1925, MJH to Durkee, January 13, 1925, Box 7, MJH-NU.
39. MJH to Robert Redfield, June 11, 1924, Box 20, MJH-NU.
40. Herskovits, *Anthropometry of the Negro*, xiv; MJH to Board of Fellowships, NRC, February 13, 1926, Box 14, MJH-NU.

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41. MJH to Locke, January 5, 1925, MJH to Locke, January 12, 1925, Locke to MJH, ca. January 16, 1925, Box 13, MJH-NU.
42. MJH to Miss Elliot, NRC, January 13, 1925, Edith Elliot, NRC, to MJH, January 21, 1925, Box 14, MJH-NU; MJH to Wissler, Committee on Problems in Human Migration, NRC, February 11, 1925, Box 26, MJH-NU.
43. “Distinctive Race of Negroes Seen,” (*Washington DC*) *Evening Star*, March 19, 1925; Zack, *Race and Mixed Race*, 122.
44. MJH to Ruth Bunzel, March 29, 1925, Box 5, MJH-NU.
45. MJH to Boas, March 3, 1925, Reel 25, Boas Papers.
46. Williamson, *New People*, 112–13.
47. Herskovits, *Anthropometry of the Negro*, 1–39.
48. Herskovits, *American Negro*, 7–8.
49. Herskovits, “Acculturation and the American Negro,” 212.
50. Herskovits, *Anthropometry of the Negro*, 19–39.
51. Herskovits based his statistical analysis on an article Boas wrote in 1919 for the *American Anthropologist*. MJH to Redfield, June 11, 1924, Box 20, MJH-NU.
52. For more on Todd, see two obituaries: “Dr. T. Wingate Todd of Cleveland Dies,” *New York Times*, December 29, 1938, and Wilton Marion Krogman, “Obituary: Thomas Wingate Todd, January 15, 1885–December 28, 1938,” *Science* 89: 143–44, February 17, 1939, Box 24, MJH-NU. Herskovits considered Todd the only one besides himself who was doing competent biometric work on the American Negro. MJH to Alfred Stern, Director, the Julius Rosenwald Fund, March 7, 1928, Box 20, MJH-NU.
53. Herskovits, *Anthropometry of the Negro*, 34–38.
54. Todd to MJH, July 23, 1923, Todd to MJH, August 13, 1923, Todd to MJH, September 5, 1923, Box 24, MJH-NU.
55. Peterson, review of *American Negro*.
56. Herskovits, *American Negro*, 67.
57. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 92.
58. Todd to MJH, July 23, 1923, Todd to MJH, August 13, 1923, Todd to MJH, September 5, 1923, Box 24, MJH-NU.
59. Todd to MJH, February 14, 1924, Box 24, MJH-NU.
60. Form FI, “Marcus Story, December 8, 1925,” Box 149, MJH-NU.
61. MJH to Todd, February 15, 1926, Box 24, MJH-NU.
62. Herskovits, *American Negro*.
63. Williamson, *New People*, 112–13.
64. MJH to Todd, May 8, 1924, Box 24, MJH-NU.
65. MJH to Todd, December 10, 1925, Box 24, MJH-NU.
66. Herskovits, *American Negro*, 9.
67. MJH to Boas, March 3, 1925, Reel 25, Boas Papers. Herskovits later reported that about 10 percent of the subjects maintained that they had at least one white grandparent. Herskovits, “Color Line,” 207.

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68. Herskovits, *American Negro*, 52. In *A Study of Some Negro-White Families in the United States* (1932), Caroline Bond Day found similarly that mulattoes avoided interracial marriages due to “an artificially exaggerated animus against interracial unions.” Day quoted in Williamson, *New People*, 116.
69. Herskovits, *Anthropometry of the Negro*, 278–80; Herskovits, *American Negro*, 80–82; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 117; Chase, *Legacy of Malthus*, 189–93.
70. Herskovits, *American Negro*, 81–82.
71. MJH to Todd, June 29, 1924, Box 24, MJH-NU; “Columbia University Professor Studying Racial Admixture,” *Amsterdam (NY) News*, July 14, 1926, Box 18, MJH-NU.
72. Herskovits, *American Negro*, 81–82.
73. MJH to Todd, May 8, 1924, Box 24, MJH-NU.
74. MJH to the Board of Fellowships in the Biological Sciences, NRC, February 28, 1925, Box 14, MJH-NU.
75. MJH to Sterling Spero, January 4, 1927, Box 22, MJH-NU.
76. Stocking, “Ideas and Institutions,” 7–8.
77. Boas to MJH, January 31, 1928, Box 3, MJH-NU.
78. Boas to MJH, November 12, 1928, Boas to MJH, November 16, 1928, Box 3, MJH-NU.
79. MJH to Boas, November 20, 1928, Boas to MJH, December 6, 1928, Box 3, MJH-NU; Herskovits, *Anthropometry of the Negro*, 280.
80. MJH to Boas, December 2, 1929, Box 3; MJH to Fay-Cooper Cole, chairman, Division of Anthropology and Psychology, NRC, December 5, 1929, Box 14, MJH-NU; MJH to Boas, March 24, 1930, Box 3, MJH-NU; Cole, NRC, to MJH, December 19, 1929, MJH to Vernon Kellogg, NRC, May 26, 1930, MJH to Kellogg, NRC, October 22, 1930, Box 14, MJH-NU.
81. MJH to Kellogg, NRC, December 26, 1930, Box 14, MJH-NU.
82. Herskovits, Cameron, and Smith, “Physical Form of Mississippi Negroes.”
83. Gunnar Myrdal, in his report on the Negro for the Carnegie Corporation, *An American Dilemma*, criticized Herskovits’s conclusions on this basis. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, n.59, 1211.
84. Meier to Loren Eiseley, May 4, 1947, MJH to Meier, June 5, 1947, Box 39, MJH-NU.
85. Meier to MJH, March 30, 1948, Meier to MJH, May 10, 1948, August Meier, “A Study of the Racial Ancestry of the Mississippi College Negro,” typescript, MJH to Meier, June 9, 1948, Box 39, MJH-NU.
86. When the book was reissued in the 1960s, one reviewer emphasized that the long-term significance of the book was the “underlining cultural and social questions that Herskovits attempts to answer” and not the anthropometry that was out of date. Williams, review of *American Negro*.
87. MJH to Boas, March 3, 1925, Reel 25, Boas Papers.

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88. Herskovits, "Correlation," 87–97.
89. Davenport, review of *American Negro*. Barkan characterized Davenport as "the most prominent racist among American scientists." Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 69.
90. Bean, review of *American Negro*.
91. "Columbia University Professor Studying Racial Admixture"; MJH to Boas, May 15, 1925, Reel 26, Boas Papers; MJH to Todd, July 11, 1925, Box 24, MJH-NU.
92. Bean, review of *American Negro*.
93. Peterson, review of *American Negro*.
94. T. Wingate Todd, review of *American Negro*, *Nation*, ca. April 5, 1928, Box 18, MJH-NU.
95. Wolf, review of *American Negro*.
96. Du Bois to MJH, May 16, 1928, Box 7, MJH-NU. Du Bois had also written on the subject of mulattoes and suggested that Herskovits look at his 1906 Atlanta University Study entitled "Health and Physique of the Negro American." Du Bois noted that his "estimate of mulattoes there is very conservative, but I had to make it in that way as I was running against the overwhelming scientific opinion of the day." Du Bois to MJH, May 28, 1928, Box 7, MJH-NU.
97. Du Bois, review of *American Negro*, *Crisis* (June 28, 1928), Box 71, MJH-SC.
98. Woodson, review of *American Negro*.
99. Todd to MJH, April 9, 1924, MJH to Todd, April 18, 1924, Box 24, MJH-NU.
100. Herskovits, "Some Observations"; MJH to the Board of Fellowships in the Biological Sciences, NRC, February 28, 1925, Box 14, MJH-NU.
101. "Columbia University Professor Studying Racial Admixture."
102. Herskovits, "Growth of Interpupillary Distance"; Herskovits, "Correlation."
103. MJH to Locke, April 25, 1928, Box 13, MJH-NU.
104. MJH to Woodson, April 25, 1928, Box 71, MJH-SC.
105. Frazier, review of *American Negro*. Reviews by Charles S. Johnson and others in Box 71, MJH-SC.
106. Frazier, review of *American Negro*.
107. Williamson, *New People*, 121–29. Earlier works on race mixing and mulattoes in the United States included Weatherby, "Race and Marriage"; Reuter, *The Mulatto in the United States*. Reuter was a student of Robert Park's at the University of Chicago. Woodson, "Beginnings." Works that came out after Herskovits's work included Day, *Study of Some Negro-White Families*; Frazier, "Children in Black and Mulatto Families"; Linton, "Vanishing American Negro."
108. Williamson, *New People*, 125–29.
109. Williamson, *New People*, 121–29.
110. Embree, *Brown America*, 3, 9–10.

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111. MJH to Dorothy Scarborough, Columbia University, November 19, 1931, Box 23, MJH-NU.
112. MJH to Woofter, January 12, 1933, Box 26, MJH-NU.
113. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 123, 216; Harris, *Rise of Anthropological Theory*, 138–39.
114. Herskovits, “Test of the Downey Will-Temperament Test”; Herskovits, “What Is a Race?”; Herskovits, “Brains and the Immigrant”; Herskovits, “On the Relation between Negro-White Mixture”; Herskovits, *Negro and the Intelligence Tests*.
115. Campbell, introduction to *Cultural Relativism*, vii.
116. Downey, *Will-Temperament*, 60–61; Uhrbrock, *Analysis of the Downey Will-Temperament Tests*.
117. Herskovits, “Test of the Downey Will-Temperament Test.”
118. Campbell, introduction to *Cultural Relativism*, vii.
119. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 80–84.
120. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 93–94.
121. Howard, *Margaret Mead*, 64.
122. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 135–38, 336.
123. Herskovits, “What Is a Race?”
124. Herskovits, “Brains and the Immigrant.”
125. MJH to Boas, May 15, 1925, Reel 26, Boas Papers; MJH to Todd, July 11, 1925, Box 24, MJH-NU.
126. Herskovits, “On the Relation Between Negro-White Mixture,” 30–42, Herskovits quote from 41.
127. Klineberg, “Study of Psychological Differences”; Klineberg, *Negro Intelligence*.
128. Herskovits, “The Negro and the Intelligence Tests,” ca. February 15, 1927, MJH-NU; Herskovits, *The Negro and the Intelligence Tests*.
129. Peterson, review of *American Negro*.
130. Malcolm Willey to MJH, December 8, 1928, MJH to Willey, December 10, 1928, Box 26, MJH-NU.
131. Evidence of Herskovits’s stature in the field includes his publication of a number of related articles during the 1930s for the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. For example, see Herskovits, “Anthropometry”; Herskovits, “Race Mixture.”
132. MJH to George R. Arthur, Associate for Negro Welfare, Julius Rosenwald Fund, May 29, 1929, Box 3, MJH-NU.
133. Bohannon, *Social Anthropology*, 192–94.
134. Herskovits, “Race Mixture,” 41.
135. Herskovits, “Race Mixture,” 42.
136. Herskovits, “Race Mixture,” 43.
137. Helen Gruenberg to MJH, June 6, 1940, Box 8, MJH-NU.

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138. MJH to Helen Gruenberg, June 8, 1940, Box 8, MJH-NU.
139. MJH to Gertrude M. Anderson, February 13, 1946, Box 3, MJH-NU.
140. MJH to Monod, March 7, 1946, Box 33, MJH-NU.
141. Melville J. Herskovits, "The Myths of Prejudice," Proceedings of the Chicago Conference on Home Front Unity, May, June, 1945, Published by the Mayor's Committee on Race Relations, Chicago, Box 33, MJH-NU.
142. "Challenge Negro Education Study," *Chicago News*, September 24, 1956, Melville J. Herskovits File, College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Reprints, Biographical Files, NU Archives.
143. Todd to MJH, December 3, 1929, Box 24, MJH-NU.
144. MJH to Wingate Todd, December 9, 1929, Box 24, MJH-NU.
145. MJH to Wingate Todd, March 17, 1936, Box 24, MJH-NU; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 104–8; Hooton, *Crime and the Man*.
146. Spier to MJH, November 28, 1943, Box 30, MJH-NU. In the same letter Spier also noted that it was odd "that Boas left so few direct descendants in this particular field"—physical anthropology. "[T]o my mind you are the one man who most closely follows on with the directives he gave." Herskovits told Spier that the only physical anthropologists who had approved of his Boas article were Wilton M. Krogman, Ashley Montagu, and, surprisingly, Hooton. MJH to Spier, December 1, 1943, Box 30, MJH-NU; Herskovits, "Franz Boas."
147. MJH to Goldstein, March 31, 1948, Box 38, MJH-NU.
148. Herskovits, "Acculturation and the American Negro," 212.
149. Williams, *Rethinking Race*, 4, 6–7, 35.
150. Herskovits, "Acculturation and the American Negro," 214–15.
151. Herskovits, "Who Are the Jews?" 1158–63.
152. Herskovits, "Who Are the Jews?" 1152.
153. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 133–35.
154. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 133–35.
155. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 133.
156. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 135.
157. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 135–36.
158. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 136–39.
159. Bohannon, *Social Anthropology*. Bohannon, like Herskovits, taught at Northwestern and was a specialist on Africa.
160. Bohannon, *Social Anthropology*, 185–88. Bohannon noted that although Earnest A. Hooton's 1931 definition of race, "a great division of mankind, the members of which, though individually varying, are characterized as a group by a certain combination of morphological and metrical features, principally non-adaptive, which have been derived from their common descent," was commonsensical, it still did not make race a useful category for scientific research.



161. Bohannon, *Social Anthropology*, 192–94. In recent decades geneticists have further demonstrated the absurdity of race as a biological concept: “85 percent of all genetic variation is between individuals within the same local population. A further 8 percent of all genetic variation is between local population or groups within what is considered to be a major race. Just 7 percent of genetic variation is between major races.” Malik, *Meaning of Race*, 4. See also Marks, *Human Biodiversity*.
162. Bohannon, *Social Anthropology*, 194–95.

### 3. Transforming the Debate on Black Culture

1. Arthur J. Todd, chairman, sociology department, Northwestern University, to MJH, May 16, 1927, Box 24, MJH-NU. Todd initially contacted Herskovits for the position based on Franz Boas’s recommendation. With no anthropology department at Northwestern in 1927, Herskovits initially taught in the sociology department.
2. Gleason, “American Identity,” 33.
3. Giroux, “Resisting Difference,” 206.
4. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 158–67.
5. Logan, *Betrayal of the Negro*; Williamson, *Crucible of Race*; Daniels, *Coming to America*, 245–46. The Naturalization Act of 1870 excluded Chinese immigrants from American citizenship, and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 excluded Chinese immigration. Chinese aliens were excluded from American citizenship until 1943, while other Asian immigrants were also excluded from citizenship, in some cases until 1952. Daniels, *Coming to America*, 245–46.
6. Giroux, “Resisting Difference,” 207; Thuesen, “Taking the Vows,” 297.
7. Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*, 46.
8. Gleason, “American Identity,” 39–41.
9. Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity*, 205–9; Coben, *Rebellion Against Victorianism*, 136–37. The Midwest, including Herskovits’s home state of Ohio, was a center of Klan activity.
10. McKee, *Sociology*, 123.
11. McKee, *Sociology*, 124.
12. Matthews, *Quest for an American Sociology*, 160–62. For Park’s years at Tuskegee, see Raushenbush, *Robert E. Park*, 43–63.
13. Park, “Conflict and Fusion,” 116.
14. Park, “Conflict and Fusion,” 112–33.
15. Herskovits, “The Negro’s Americanism.” David L. Lewis called Herskovits an “Honorary New Negro” as he was one of only four nonblack contributors to the special March 1925 issue of the *Survey Graphic* called “Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro.” Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, 115–16.
16. Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, 92–95.

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17. Locke to MJH, May 26, 1924, Box 13, MJH-NU.
18. Locke to MJH, April 24, 1924, Locke to MJH, May 26, 1924, Locke to MJH, ca. June 1924, Box 13, MJH-NU.
19. Herskovits, "Dilemma of Social Pattern"; Herskovits, "The Negro's Americanism," 353. James Weldon Johnson expressed a similar opinion in his article in *The New Negro*, "Harlem Talks American, Reads American, Thinks American." Quoted in Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, 113.
20. Jackson, "Melville J. Herskovits," 105–6.
21. Locke, foreword to *New Negro*, xi.
22. Locke, "Negro Spirituals," 199.
23. Fauset, "American Negro Folk Literature."
24. Barnes, "Negro Art and America," 19–20.
25. Rogers, "Jazz at Home," 216–21.
26. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past."
27. Joseph Ralph to MJH, January 12, 1925, MJH to Joseph Ralph, January 18, 1925, Box 20, MJH-NU.
28. MJH to John Palmer, The Arts Club, Chicago, December 1, 1933, MJH-NU; Herskovits, "Acculturation and the American Negro."
29. Herskovits, "Acculturation and the American Negro," 215.
30. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. "Acculturation," by Keesing, 6.
31. During the early twentieth century, "acculturation," "assimilation," "diffusion," "culture contact," and "cultural borrowing" were used interchangeably without distinctly different meanings. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. "Acculturation," by Keesing, 6. In 1931 anthropologist A. L. Kroeber had defined "diffusion" as a "process . . . by which elements or systems of culture are spread, by which an invention or a new institution adopted in one place is adopted in neighboring area." Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 12–13.
32. In fact, in the 1933 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), there was no listing for "acculturation." By contrast, "assimilation" has a long history, with the 1933 OED listing an early usage from 1605. "Assimilate" was first used in a religious context; for example, in 1628 the term was defined as to become like God. The first two definitions in 1933 were "To make or be like," and "To be or become like." Murray et al., *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "assimilate," "assimilation," 510.
33. Malcolm Willey to MJH, April 6, 1928, Box 26, MJH-NU.
34. MJH to Willey, April 11, 1928, Box 26, MJH-NU.
35. Herskovits, "Acculturation and the American Negro," 224.
36. Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*, 423.
37. Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*, 306.
38. MJH to Hornbostel, June 10, 1927, Box 9, MJH-NU. In a letter to Hurston the

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- previous month, Boas suggested that African “mannerisms” were retained by African Americans. Baron, “Africa in the Americas,” 105.
39. Jackson, “Melville J. Herskovits,” 103–4.
  40. McKee, *Sociology*, 122–23. For Randolph Bourne, see Clayton, *Forgotten Prophet*; Bourne, “Trans-National America.”
  41. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 304, 392; Jackson, “Melville J. Herskovits,” 101. For the development of cultural pluralism in American thought, see also Higham, “Ethnic Pluralism”; Matthews, “Revolt against Americanism.” Despite Kallen’s and Bourne’s embrace of cultural diversity, they omitted African Americans from their discussions of American cultural pluralism. Recently, Paul Robeson Jr. maintained that “native Blacks are the only minority still excluded from the melting pot.” Roberson, *Paul Robeson, Jr. Speaks to America*, 114.
  42. Bourne, “Trans-National America,” 266.
  43. Bourne, “Trans-National America,” 272.
  44. Higham, *Send These to Me*, 211.
  45. Du Bois, “Conservation of Races”; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, 171.
  46. Du Bois, “Conservation of Races,” 23.
  47. Du Bois, “Conservation of Races,” 24–25.
  48. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, 281.
  49. Matthews, “Revolt Against Americanism,” 14–15.
  50. MJH to Edith Elliot, Board of Fellowships in the Biological Sciences, NRC, January 27, 1926, Box 14, MJH-NU; Herskovits, “Bush Negroes of Suriname” *Daily Argosy* (British Guiana) April 25, 1929, MJH-NU.
  51. MJH to Edith Elliot, January 27, 1926.
  52. In 1928 Du Bois told Herskovits that there was no decent study that addressed this question. MJH to Du Bois, November 26, 1928, Du Bois to MJH, December 7, 1928, Box 7, MJH-NU.
  53. Jackson, “Melville Herskovits,” 105–6.
  54. MJH to John Palmer, the Arts Club, Chicago, December 1, 1933, Box 19, MJH-NU.
  55. MJH to Hornbostel, April 30, 1927, Box 9, MJH-NU.
  56. Hornbostel to MJH, May 29, 1927, Hornbostel to MJH, June 27, 1927, Box 9, MJH-NU.
  57. MJH to Hornbostel, June 10, 1927, Box 9, MJH-NU.
  58. MJH to Hornbostel, October 5, 1927, Box 9, MJH-NU.
  59. MJH to Willey, October 29, 1927, Box 26, MJH-NU.
  60. MJH to Todd, December 14, 1927, MJH to Boas, January 25, 1928, Box 24, MJH-NU.
  61. Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion*, 1–14; Deacon, *Elsie Clews Parsons*, 247–78.

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62. Abrahams, foreword to *Wealth and Rebellion*, x; MJH to Parsons, April 30, 1927, Box 18, MJH-NU.
63. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-Lore*, vii, 2; Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, vii–xiv; MJH to Parsons, December 6, 1927, Box 18, MJH-NU.
64. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-Lore*, vii, 2; Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, vii–xiv; Whitten and Szwed, introduction to *Afro-American Anthropology*, 32.
65. Herskovits, “Bush Negroes of Suriname.”
66. MJH to Parsons, December 6, 1927, Box 18, MJH-NU; Herskovits, “Trip to ‘Africa,’” 10–11.
67. MJH to Boas, November 9, 1927, MJH to Boas, December 6, 1927, Reel 27, Boas Papers; Boas to MJH, December 3, 1927, Boas to MJH, January 30, 1928, Box 3, MJH-NU; MJH to Parsons, December 6, 1927, Box 18, MJH-NU.
68. Hilary Conroy, “Meet Melville Herskovits,” *Daily Northwestern*, March 13, 1940, Box 18, MJH-NU.
69. Herskovits, “Personal Diary—Surinam, June 1928–August, 1928,” June 30, July 3, 11, 17, 1928, entries, Box 6, MJH-SC; Herskovits, “Trip to ‘Africa,’” 10–11.
70. Herskovits, “Second Northwestern University Expedition.” There were three distinct Maroon peoples: the Saramacca, among whom the Herskovitses spent most of their two field trips; the Awka; and the Boni. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, vii–viii.
71. *Denver (Colorado) News*, June 9, 1929, MJH-NU.
72. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, 11–12.
73. Herskovits, “Bush Negroes of Suriname.”
74. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 91–92.
75. Herskovits, “Personal Diary—Surinam, June 1928–August 1928.”
76. Mead to MJH, February 1, 1962, Box 97, MJH-NU.
77. Price, *Guiana Maroons*, 56–57. See also Blier, “Field Days.”
78. Herskovits to Robert Lynd, January 13, 1930, Box 13, MJH-NU.
79. Margaret Mead to MJH, February 1, 1962, MJH to Mead, February 14, 1962, Box 97, MJH-NU.
80. Baron, “Africa in the Americas,” 229, 263.
81. Ottenberg quoted in Blier, “Field Days,” 12.
82. The last two weeks of the expedition were marked by conflicts with the native workers over pay and contentious bargaining with villagers for native goods. Surinam Diary, 1929, Box 6, MJH-SC.
83. Baron, “Africa in the Americas,” 208–10.
84. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, 263–70.
85. Herskovits, “Personal Diary—Surinam, June 1928–August 1928.”

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86. Baron, "Africa in the Americas," 207–8; Price and Price, *Afro-American Arts*, 44–45.
87. Herskovits quoted in Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 145.
88. Herskovits, "Personal Diary—Surinam, June 1928–August, 1928," July 19 entry.
89. Herskovits, "Bush Negroes of Suriname"; Herskovits, "Personal Diary—Surinam, June 1928–August 1928."
90. Herskovits, "Bush Negroes of Suriname"; Herskovits, "Personal Diary—Surinam, June 1928–August 1928."
91. Herskovits, "Trip to 'Africa,'" 11–12.
92. "Diary of Mrs. Henrietta (Hart) Herskovits"; News Clipping, n.d., Box 1, MJH-SC; Herskovits, interview.
93. Herskovits, "Personal Diary—Surinam, June 1928–August 1928."
94. MJH to Hornbostel, November 18, 1929, Box 9, MJH-NU.
95. MJH to Hornbostel, November 18, 1929; Herskovits, "Second Northwestern University Expedition," 393–402.
96. MJH to Hornbostel, May 12, 1930, Box 9, MJH-NU.
97. Hornbostel to MJH, July 4, 1930, Box 9, MJH-NU. Later on, Herskovits employed Hornbostel, at the Staatliche Akademische Hochschule Fur Musik in Berlin, Phonogramm-Archiv, in the transcription of Herskovits's field recordings. Hornbostel gave the work to his assistant, M. Kolinski. Hornbostel to MJH, September 29, 1931, MJH-NU.
98. Herskovits, "Trip to 'Africa,'" 11–12.
99. Herskovits, "Second Northwestern University Expedition."
100. Herskovits, "Bush Negroes of Suriname."
101. Herskovits, "Second Northwestern University Expedition"; MJH to Boas, October 5, 1929, Box 3, MJH-NU.
102. MJH to Boas, October 22, 1928, Box 3, MJH-NU.
103. Herskovits, "Trip to 'Africa,'" 10–11.
104. Herskovits, "Trip to 'Africa,'" 10–11; Herskovits, "Bush Negroes of Suriname."
105. Herskovits, "Bush Negroes of Suriname."
106. Herskovits, "Trip to 'Africa,'" 10–11.
107. Herskovits, "The Negro in the New World."
108. Herskovits, "New World Negro."
109. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 9.
110. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*; Herskovits and Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-Lore*.
111. Cowley, "Books in Review"; Sapir, "Bush Negro of Dutch Guiana"; Puckett, review of *Rebel Destiny*; Mead, review of *Rebel Destiny*; Herzog, review of *Suriname Folklore*; van Panhuys, review of *Suriname Folk-Lore*; Gillin, review of *Suriname Folklore*.

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112. MJH to Boas, June 18, 1930, Box 3, MJH-NU.
113. MJH to Parsons, April 29, 1930, Box 18, MJH-NU.
114. MJH to Boas, May 22, 1930, Box 3, MJH-NU.
115. MJH to Parsons, May 14, 1930, Box 18, MJH-NU; Boas to MJH, May 15, 1930, Box 3, MJH-NU.
116. MJH to Du Bois, December 2, 1930, Du Bois to MJH, December 10, 1930, MJH to Du Bois, December 16, 1930, Box 7, MJH-NU.
117. West African Field Trip Journals, 1931, Box 9, MJH-SC; Blier, “Field Days.”
118. “West African Field Trip, 1931, Ashanti Field Notes—West Africa,” Box 9, MJH-SC.
119. MJH to Boas, April 7, 1931, Reel 32, Boas Papers.
120. “West African Field Trip, 1931.”
121. MJH to Boas, April 18, 1931, Reel 32, Boas Papers.
122. Herskovits, *Dahomey*.
123. Herskovits, *Dahomey*, vol. 1, 25.
124. McKinley, *Lure of Africa*, 150–51; Herskovits, “Negro Art”; Herskovits, “Art of the Congo.”
125. Herskovits and Herskovits, “Art of Dahomey: I”; Herskovits and Herskovits, “Art of Dahomey: II.”
126. Harms, “Wars of August.” Harms argued that this was a general tendency on the part of anthropologists when writing historical ethnographies.
127. Caulfield, “Culture and Imperialism,” 183–86.
128. Herskovits, *Dahomey*, vol. 2, 3–49.
129. In 1974 Edward McKinley maintained of *Dahomey*, “The work was of such high quality that it has yet to be superseded.” McKinley, *Lure of Africa*, 150.
130. Earthy, review of *Dahomey*; Cline, review of *Dahomey*.
131. Linton, “Civilization in Dahomey.” A later volume by the Herskovitses, *Dahomean Narrative: A Cross-Cultural Analysis*, dealing with the folklore of Dahomey was not published until 1958. In this case the reviews were mixed, the main criticism was that the stories were translated from the original Fon to French and “then written for the first time and in English! . . . the loss of the original text removes that condition which would have made it possible for other scholars ‘independently to control the version’ which R. R. Marett considered indispensable ‘to satisfy the demands of science.’” McCall, review of *Dahomean Narrative*, 256. Hortense Powdermaker favorably reviewed *Dahomean Narrative*, “a collection of 155 myths and tales, preceded by a discussion of Dahomean narratives as literature and a critique of significant theories about mythology.” Powdermaker said that this book makes us “more aware of how these Africans are like all other people and we also appreciate the ways in which their culture differs.” Powdermaker, review of *Dahomean Narrative*, Box 85, MJH-NU. See also Berry, review of *Dahomean Narrative*; Simpson, review of *Dahomean Narrative*.

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132. Locke, “Out of Africa.”
133. Woodson, review of *Dahomey*.
134. MJH to Parsons, July 29, 1933, Parsons to MJH, August 8, 1933, Box 18, MJH-NU.
135. MJH to Boas, September 6, 1933, Boas to MJH, November 28, 1933, Box 4, MJH-NU.
136. Lieberman, “Melville J. Herskovits,” 165. Lieberman called Herskovits the “father of American anthropology in the Caribbean.”
137. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 11; Brathwaite, introduction to *Life in a Haitian Valley*, xv; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 12, 100.
138. MJH to Parsons, October 8, 1934, Box 18, Folder 3, MJH-NU; MJH to Willey, October 1, 1934, Box 26, MJH-NU; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 212–13.
139. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*.
140. Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 246–50.
141. Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 254.
142. Herskovits, “Voodoo Nonsense.”
143. MJH to Parsons, October 8, 1934, Box 18, MJH-NU; MJH to Willey, October 1, 1934, Box 26, MJH-NU.
144. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 63, 105–8.
145. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 251.
146. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 253–54.
147. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 267–91.
148. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 290.
149. MJH to Parsons, October 8, 1934, Box 18, MJH-NU; MJH to Willey, October 1, 1934, Box 26, MJH-NU.
150. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 295–96.
151. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” 29.
152. Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 48–52.
153. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 299–305.
154. Puckett, review of *Life in a Haitian Valley*; Alain Locke, “Jingo, Counter-Jingo and Us,” *Opportunity*, Box 18, MJH-NU. In 1938 the Haitian government awarded Herskovits the Order of Honor and Merit for *Life in a Haitian Valley*. *New York Times*, September 18, 1938, MJH-NU. More recently, anthropologist Sidney W. Mintz called *Life in a Haitian Valley* “a pioneering work, probably the first modern objective account of rural Haiti prepared by an outsider.” He continued, “As a ground-breaking anthropological study of a society previously either ignored or slandered by casual incompetents, it is of first importance.” Mintz, “In Memoriam,” 46.
155. Benedict, “Truth About Voodoo in Haiti,” review of *Life in a Haitian Valley*, *New York Herald Tribune*, April 18, 1937, Box 18, MJH-NU.
156. Robert Redfield, review of *Life in a Haitian Valley*, *Annals of the American*

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- Academy of Political and Social Science* 193 (September 1937), 208–9, Box 18, MJH-NU.
157. Herzog, “Anatomy of Accommodation.”
158. Johnson, review of *Life in a Haitian Valley*. For Johnson’s writings on the culture of African Americans, see Johnson, “Negro Spiritual,” 170; Johnson, *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island*.
159. MJH to Dr. Robert M. Lester, Carnegie Corp. of New York, January 8, 1940, Box 5, MJH-NU.
160. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, v. Ironically, although they did find African influences, they did not find a Shango cult in Toco.
161. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 287–88.
162. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 6–7.
163. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 293–94.
164. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 298–99.
165. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 167, 305.
166. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 305–9.
167. Catherine H. Berndt, review of *Trinidad Village*, *Oceania* 19, September 1948, Box 46, MJH-NU; T. S. Simey, “The Social Nature of the West Indian Negro,” review of *Trinidad Village*, *Geographic Journal* 111 (September 1948), 254–57, Box 46, MJH-NU; Horace Miner, review of *Trinidad Village*, *American Sociological Review*, April 1948, Box 41, MJH-NU.
168. Simey, “Social Nature of the West Indian Negro.”
169. Eric Williams, “In the Land of Rum and Coca-Cola,” review of *Trinidad Village*, *Journal of Negro Education* 16 (Fall 1947): 548–50, Box 41, MJH-NU; Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 124–25.
170. MJH to Dr. Charles Thompson, editor, *Journal of Negro Education*, February 19, 1948, Box 42, MJH-NU.
171. Zora Neale Hurston, “The Transplanted Negro,” review of *Trinidad Village*, *New York Herald Tribune*, March 9, 1947, Box 41, MJH-NU.
172. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 307–8.
173. Joseph H. Willits, Director, the Social Sciences, Rockefeller Foundation, to MJH, June 12, 1941, H. M. Gillette, Assistant Comptroller, Rockefeller Foundation to Dr. Fred D. Fagg Jr., Dean of Faculties, NU, June 24, 1941, Box 20, MJH-NU; Herskovits, “Report of Field Work in Brazil, 1941–1942,” 1–4, Box 20, MJH-NU.
174. MJH to Willits, October 16, 1924, including “Report of Field Work in Brazil,” Box 20, MJH-NU.
175. Herskovits, interview; Herskovits’s daughter, Jean, believes that her father wrote less about Brazil than his other fieldtrips due to the scary association of Brazil with his heart attack. Due to Herskovits’s work for the Bureau of Economic Warfare during World War II, his all-consuming focus on the Program of African Studies after the war, and his interest in not interrupting



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- his daughter's schooling, he never undertook another ethnographic fieldtrip after Brazil. Herskovits, interview.
176. Herskovits, "Report of Field Work in Brazil," 5–8; Herskovits and Herskovits, "Negroes of Brazil," 263–69.
  177. Herskovits, "Report of Field Work in Brazil," 5–8; Herskovits and Herskovits, "Negroes of Brazil," 263–69.
  178. Herskovits and Herskovits, "Negroes of Brazil," 269–79.
  179. Herskovits "Report of Field Work in Brazil."
  180. Herskovits, "Southernmost Outpost?"
  181. Robert T. Crane, Executive Director, SSRC, to MJH, January 22, 1935, Box 22, MJH-NU; Robert Redfield, Robert Linton, and Melvin J. Herskovits, "A Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation," *American Anthropologist* 38: 149–52; *Man* 35: 162, 145–48; *Africa* 9: ix, 114–118; and *Oceania* 6: 229–33; Stocking, *Selected Papers*, 19.
  182. Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 10. In 1948, in *Man and His Works*, Herskovits changed this formulation to include moderate and sporadic contact as sometimes leading to acculturation as in the example of missionary visits. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. "Acculturation," by Keesing, 7.
  183. Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 10.
  184. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. "Acculturation," by Keesing, 6.
  185. MJH to Leslie Spier, March 5, 1936, Spier to Schapera, February 26, 1936, Box 1, MJH-NU; Baron, "'Primitive' Cultures," 4.
  186. MJH to Leslie Spier, March 5, 1936; Spier to Schapera, February 26, 1936.
  187. Baron, "'Primitive' Cultures," 6–7.
  188. Herskovits, "Significance of the Study of Acculturation."
  189. Beals, "Acculturation," 376–77; Baron, "'Primitive' Cultures," 6–7.
  190. Donald Young to MJH, April 19, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
  191. Robert T. Crane, Executive Director, SSRC, to MJH, November 22, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
  192. Donald Young to MJH, April 19, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
  193. MJH to Donald Young, November 12, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
  194. Robert T. Crane, Executive Director, SSRC, to MJH, November 22, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
  195. Young to MJH, April 19, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
  196. MJH to Young, December 16, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU. In the preface to his book, Herskovits did acknowledge the role of the SSRC and its Subcommittee on Acculturation. Herskovits, *Acculturation*, v; Young to MJH, April 19, 1937, Box 22, Folder 4, MJH-NU.
  197. Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 9–11, 15.
  198. Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 16–17. Herskovits's focus on acculturation was partially determined by his choice of subjects, Africans and African Ameri-

cans. Cultural anthropologists who studied in Oceania were usually studying cultures that had had little contact with outside cultures. By contrast, anthropologists who studied African cultures, like those who studied Native Americans, were faced with a different dynamic. African cultures had had much greater contact with other African cultures and with external—European, Arab—cultures. Thus Herskovits insisted that acculturation studies were an important part of cultural anthropology, while anthropologists working in more isolated cultures did not.

199. Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 31–32.
200. MJH to Dr. Bernhard Stern, June 2, 1941, Box 23, MJH-NU.
201. Sills, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, s.v. “Acculturation,” by Spicer, 21–26.
202. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. “Acculturation,” by Keesing, 6.
203. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. “Acculturation,” by Keesing, 6.
204. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. “Assimilation,” by Faris, 38.
205. Gould and Kolb, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. “Acculturation,” by Keesing, 7.

#### 4. Subverting the Myth of the Negro Past

1. “British Broadcasting Corporation, London, England, America To-Day,” Box 4, MJH-NU.
2. Dollard to Keppel, memo, July 23, 1942, with quote from October 24, 1935, minutes of Board of Trustees meeting, Negro Study General Correspondence (NSGC), Reel 91, Carnegie Corporation of New York Papers, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York (hereafter cited as Carnegie Papers); Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 16–22.
3. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 6–7, 99–103; Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 10–22.
4. Herskovits to Frederick Keppel, Carnegie Corporation, April 8, 1936, Box 14, MJH-NU.
5. Donald Young to MJH, December 27, 1936, Box 22, MJH-NU.
6. Herskovits to Donald Young, SSRC, January 2, 1936? (probably incorrectly dated, should be 1937), Box 22, MJH-NU.
7. Young to Keppel, January 30, 1937, Box 14, MJH-NU.
8. Herskovits to Donald Young, January 2, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU. John Stanfield has argued that blacks involved in the Myrdal study were little more than research assistants with little decision-making responsibility. Stanfield, *Philanthropy and Jim Crow*, 142, 179.

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9. Frederick Keppel, memo, July 15, 1937, NSGC, Reel 90, Carnegie Papers; Donald Young to MJH, April 19, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
10. Jackson, "Melville Herskovits," 117.
11. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 33.
12. Keppel to Myrdal, August 15, 1937, NSGC, Frederick Keppel, memo, July 15, 1937, NSGC, Reel 90, Carnegie Papers.
13. Young to MJH, December 27, 1936, Young to Herskovits, January 30, 1937, Herskovits to Young, February 1, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU; Herskovits to Keppel, January 2, 1937, Young to Keppel, January 30, 1937, Box 14, MJH-NU.
14. Herskovits to Donald Young, SSRC, January 2, 1937, Young to Herskovits, January 30, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU; Young to Keppel, January 30, 1937, Box 14, MJH-NU.
15. Young to Keppel, January 30, 1937, Box 14, MJH-NU.
16. Young to Keppel, January 30, 1937.
17. Myrdal to Keppel, October 7, 1937, NSGC, Reel 90, Carnegie Papers.
18. Jackson, "Melville Herskovits," 118. After Myrdal accepted the directorship, Keppel advised Herskovits that he would have Myrdal contact him "early in the proceedings." Keppel and MJH, interview, September 1, 1938, Carnegie Corporation Grant Files, Box 169, Manuscript Collections, Columbia University Libraries, New York (hereafter cited as CCG Files).
19. Resolution B1552 of Executive Committee, Carnegie Corporation, January 20, 1938, NSGC, Reel 90, Carnegie Papers.
20. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, xvii.
21. Myrdal to Keppel, January 28, 1939, Box 14, MJH-NU.
22. Myrdal to Keppel, January 28, 1939.
23. Myrdal to Keppel, January 28, 1939.
24. Myrdal to Keppel, January 28, 1939.
25. Gunnar Myrdal, "Comments by Melville Herskovits, Northwestern Univ., February 27, 1939," Gunnar Myrdal Study, Schomburg Center.
26. Myrdal, "Comments by Melville Herskovits."
27. Dollard, record of interview with Myrdal, March 7, 1939, NSGC, Reel 91, Carnegie Papers.
28. "Memorandum of Interview, Dr. Myrdal and Prof. Herskovits, June 1, 1939," Myrdal Study, Schomburg Center; Myrdal to MJH, June 21, 1939, Box 14, MJH-NU. Herskovits and Myrdal later reconfirmed their agreement. Myrdal, "Memorandum on Disposition of Study of American Negro," September 10, 1939, MJH to Myrdal, October 2, 1939, Myrdal to MJH, October 16, 1939, Box 14, MJH-NU.
29. MJH to Myrdal, July 9, 1939, Box 14, MJH-NU.
30. Myrdal to MJH, July 17, 1939, Myrdal Study, Schomburg Center.

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31. MJH to Myrdal, July 31, 1939, MJH to Myrdal, October 18, 1939, Box 14, MJH-NU.
32. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 110.
33. Myrdal to Keppel, January 28, 1939, Box 14, MJH-NU.
34. Myrdal, "Memorandum on Disposition of Study of American Negro."
35. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 131–32.
36. Young, *Black Writers*, x, 3–5, 15–17, 20, 24–25, 41–61; Holloway, *Confronting the Veil*, 15, 153–55, 167, 196–97.
37. Du Bois quoted in Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 331.
38. Du Bois, "Segregation," 20.
39. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 153–55.
40. Young, *Black Writers*, 15; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 14.
41. Young, *Black Writers*, 20–25.
42. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 130–31; Kirby, "Race, Class, and Politics"; Henry, *Ralph Bunche*, 44, 52–64; Sitkoff, *New Deal for Blacks*, 258–60.
43. Jackson, "Between Socialism and Nationalism," 128, 133.
44. Jackson, "Between Socialism and Nationalism," 128.
45. Frazier, "Traditions and Patterns," 192–94.
46. Frazier, *Negro Family*. Anthony Platt's biography attempts to rehabilitate Frazier from his association with the 1965 Moynihan Report, which emphasized the pathology of black life in America. Platt also emphasizes the differences between Frazier's academic and nonacademic writings. As an academic, Frazier embraced the role of detached scholar, while in his nonacademic writings he spoke out against oppression. Platt, *E. Franklin Frazier*.
47. Frazier, *Negro Family*, 479.
48. Frazier, "Traditions and Patterns," 192–94.
49. Park, *Race and Culture*, 72.
50. Park, *Race and Culture*, 76–77.
51. Park, *Race and Culture*, 269.
52. Stewart, introduction to *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, xlv–xlviii; Henry, *Ralph Bunche*, 56–57.
53. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 131.
54. Franklin, *Living Our Stories*, 219.
55. Thuesen, "Taking the Vows," 297.
56. MJH to Parsons, November 19, 1931, Box 18, Folder 3, MJH-NU.
57. MJH to Parsons, November 18, 1930, Box 18, Folder 3, MJH-NU.
58. Guy B. Johnson to Myrdal, memorandum, August 26, 1939, Box 131, Folder 27, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University (hereafter cited as Frazier Papers); Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 109.
59. Herskovits, "Preliminary Memorandum on the Problem of African Surviv-

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- als,” ca. January 1, 1940, Box 14, MJH-NU. In this statement Herskovits ignores the influence of cultural change in America.
60. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.”
  61. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.”
  62. Surinam Diary, 1929, Box 6, MJH-SC.
  63. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.”
  64. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.” On Nott, see Tucker, *Science and Politics*, 21–22.
  65. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.” The black singer, actor, and activist Paul Robeson was another key intellectual who sought to spread the idea of the African cultural influence on black Americans. According to his biographer, Robeson differed from many black artists in his support for “an African cultural heritage that understood the primary importance of spiritual values, in contrast to the desiccated rationalism, and the worship of technology and material accumulation, that characterized the West.” Robeson’s worldview was one that “combined . . . ethnic integrity and international solidarity.” He believed in “the ultimate goal of a humane society that was simultaneously anti-assimilationist and cosmopolitan.” Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 170–73. At a 1935 New York concert, Robeson offered evidence “that American Negroes, contrary to general belief, have retained substantial remnants of ancestral African culture,” including aspects of speech, spirituals, and folklore. Robeson also recounted his experience making the film *Sanders of the River* in West Africa and meeting an Ibo man from Nigeria who used words that Robeson’s father, who was born a slave, had used in America. Like Woodson and Du Bois, Robeson also rejected assimilationism: “[T]o allow our heritage to become submerged by the white man’s culture makes for corruption and denies our African birthright.” “U.S. Negroes Retain Culture of Africa, Asserts Robeson,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 31, 1935, Box 18, MJH-NU.
  66. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, 222–23.
  67. Du Bois, *The Negro*; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, 461–62.
  68. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 76.
  69. Woodson, *African Background Outlined*. For African survivals, see 168–75.
  70. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.”
  71. Herskovits, review of *African Background*; Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 183; MJH to Elsie Clews Parsons, June 8, 1936, Box 18, MJH-NU; MJH to Donald Young, July 8, 1936, Box 22, MJH-NU.
  72. Meier to MJH, September 27, 1954, MJH to Meier, October 4, 1954, Box 68, MJH-NU.
  73. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, 190–91, 200–209, 219–25.
  74. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.”
  75. St. Clair Drake, “Herskovits and African Diaspora Studies: An Edited and Amended Version of an Address Delivered on May 27, 1988, at the Schom-

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- burg Center for Research in Black Culture,” in “Selected Papers of a Conference: Melville J. Herskovits and the Future of Africana Studies, A Research Symposium, May 27–28, 1988, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,” typescript copy in the author’s possession.
76. Frances Herskovits to Elsie Clews Parsons, December 9, 1929, Box 18, MJH-NU.
  77. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.”
  78. Guy B. Johnson to Gunnar Myrdal, n.d., enclosed with letter, Myrdal to Herskovits, January 17, 1940, Box 14, MJH-NU.
  79. MJH to Myrdal, January 20, 1940, Box 14, MJH-NU.
  80. Myrdal to Bunche, January 18, 1940, Box 29, Ralph J. Bunche Papers, Schomburg Center.
  81. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 142.
  82. Frederick Keppel, Carnegie Corp., to the Members of the Staff of the Negro Study, December 12, 1940, Herskovits to Samuel Stouffer, University of Chicago, December 16, 1940, Box 13, MJH-NU; Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 140–42, 160. During Myrdal’s absence, sociologist Samuel Stouffer of the University of Chicago headed the study.
  83. “Memorandum on the Status of the Negro Study,” Myrdal to Trustees, July 9, 1941, NSGC, Reel 91, Carnegie Papers. John Stanfield has claimed that “Herskovits, because of a dispute with Myrdal” published *Myth* separately from the main study. Stanfield, *Philanthropy and Jim Crow*, 160–61. I have found no direct evidence of this. Stanfield’s only citation for his statement is the *Myth* itself. After the publication of the *Myth*, Keppel wrote Herskovits that he read the book with “great pleasure and profit. . . . Whether or not you will succeed in shaking the habit of thought of the white writers and teachers, Heaven knows, but the book will be most welcome to the thoughtful Negroes.” Keppel to MJH, December 18, 1941, NSGC, Reel 91, Carnegie Papers.
  84. In April 1949 Harper Brothers advised Herskovits that total sales of *The Myth of the Negro Past* were 2,739 copies, with an additional 426 review copies and other free copies distributed. MJH to Dr. Ordway Tead, Harper Brothers, Publishers, April 8, 1949, Tead to MJH, April 13, 1949, Box 43, MJH-NU.
  85. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*.
  86. For a recent survey of the history of the study of the creation of African-American culture, see Levine, “African Culture.”
  87. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 18–19.
  88. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 78.
  89. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 294.
  90. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 223, 251–53.
  91. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 297–98.
  92. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 7, 144.
  93. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 151–291.

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94. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 10; Herskovits, *Acculturation*.
95. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 10.
96. Herskovits, "What Has Africa Given America?"; originally published in *New Republic* 84 (1935): 92–94.
97. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 31–32; Woodson, review of *Life in a Haitian Valley*.
98. Frazier quoted in Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 32. The Frazier quote comes from Frazier, "Traditions and Patterns," 194.
99. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 32.
100. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 95–105.
101. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 32, 298–99.
102. Johnson, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*. Frazier, "The Negro's 'Cultural Past.'"
103. Herbert Aptheker, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*, *New Masses* (February 17, 1942), Box 18, MJH-NU.
104. Carter G. Woodson, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*, *Journal of Negro History* (January 1942), 115–18, Box 18, MJH-NU.
105. W. E. B. Du Bois, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 222 (July 1942): 226–27, Box 18, MJH-NU.
106. Szwed, "American Anthropological Dilemma," 157–58; Benedict, *Race*, 132.
107. Hulsizer, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*.
108. Ruth Benedict, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*, in *New York Herald Tribune*, January 18, 1942, Box 18, MJH-NU.
109. McKee, *Sociology*, 234–36.
110. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 10.
111. Donald Campbell, interview by Walter Jackson, June 9, 1978, Northwestern University, Evanston IL, notes from Jackson's tape recording in the author's possession.
112. Alain Locke, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*, in *Multicultural Education News* (June 1942), Box 18, MJH-NU.
113. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 752–53.
114. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 1394.
115. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 928.
116. Frazier, "The Negro's 'Cultural Past.'"
117. Frazier, "The Negro's 'Cultural Past.'"
118. Frazier, *Negro Family*, 57; Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 181.
119. Frazier, "The Negro's 'Cultural Past.'"
120. Frazier, "The Negro's 'Cultural Past.'"
121. Johnson, review of *Myth of the Negro Past*, 290.

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122. Platt, *Frazier*, 127.
123. Frazier to Arnold Rose, memorandum, December 14, 1942, Box 131, Frazier Papers.
124. Platt, *Frazier*, 127.
125. Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 680–81.
126. Sitkoff, *New Deal for Blacks*, 22–23; Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 76–80, 152–53. On black nationalism, see also Stuckey, *Slave Culture*.
127. Frazier to Arnold Rose, December 14, 1942, Box 131, Frazier Papers.
128. MJH to Roger Bastide, ca. 1940, Box 3, MJH-NU.
129. MJH to Ashley Montagu, May 14, 1940, Box 13, MJH-NU.
130. Holloway, *Confronting the Veil*, 155.
131. Herskovits, interview.
132. Fortes to MJH, July 16, 1944, Box 28, MJH-NU.
133. MJH to Fortes, August 4, 1944, Box 28, MJH-NU.
134. Frank Marshall Davis, review of *The Myth of the Negro Past*, *Chicago Bee*, January 12, 1942, Box 18, MJH-NU. In 1944 Davis began teaching classes in the history of jazz at the Abraham Lincoln School in Chicago. In these classes Davis, based in part on listening to recordings made by Herskovits in Africa and the West Indies, emphasized the African influences on jazz music. Davis, *Living the Blues*, 284–85, 290.
135. Frazier to Arnold Rose, memorandum, December 14, 1942, Box 131, Frazier Papers.
136. Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 3–4.
137. Baker, *From Savage to Negro*, 198–203.
138. Szwed, “American Anthropological Dilemma,” 160.
139. McKee, *Sociology*, 34.
140. Billingsley, *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder*, 83–84.
141. Herskovits, “Preface to the Beacon Press Edition,” xvii–xxi; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 136. An important study of black culture during this period was Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*.
142. Ricks, “Some Aspects of the Religious Music of the United States Negro.”
143. Szwed, “American Anthropological Dilemma,” 162.
144. Walter P. Zenner, “Mentoring and Ethnicity in Midcentury American Anthropology: Reflections on Jewish Identity,” 14–15, unpublished paper, copy in the author’s possession.
145. Herskovits, “Ahistorical Approach.”
146. Szwed, “American Anthropological Dilemma,” 172.
147. Szwed, “American Anthropological Dilemma,” 162.
148. Szwed, “American Anthropological Dilemma,” 162.
149. Scott, *Contempt and Pity*, 81–85.
150. Szwed, “American Anthropological Dilemma,” 171.



151. Ellison, *Shadow and Act*, 301.
152. Szwed, "American Anthropological Dilemma," 162.

## 5. Objectivity and the Development of Negro Studies

1. Lyons, *Uneasy Partnership*, 22–23.
2. Smith, *Social Science*, 23–24.
3. Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals*, 26–37.
4. Karl, *Uneasy State*, 60.
5. Lyons, *Uneasy Partnership*, 26–31.
6. Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals*, 26–37.
7. Bannister, *Sociology and Scientism*, 5.
8. Fisher, *Fundamental Development*, 4–5.
9. Karl, *Uneasy State*, 60–62.
10. Fisher, *Fundamental Development*, 4–5.
11. Smith, *Social Science*, 44–47, 152–54, 266.
12. Smith, *Social Science*, 3–48.
13. Smith, *Social Science*, 44, 120–54.
14. Smith, *Social Science*, 102–4.
15. Smith, *Social Science*, 8.
16. Smith, *Social Science*, 8.
17. For a recent attempt to define African diasporic studies, see Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora."
18. Du Bois, "Pan-African Congresses, 671; Du Bois, "Africa and the American Negro," 44.
19. Sterling Stuckey, "Melville J. Herskovits, a Pioneer in African-American Studies," in "The Opening of The Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University Library," October 20, 1970, 28, unpublished paper, copy in the author's possession.
20. Drake, "Diaspora Studies," 486.
21. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 9.
22. Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism*, 87.
23. Malcolm Willey to MJH, ca. July 1927, Box 26, MJH-NU; Arthur J. Todd, chairman, sociology department, Northwestern University, to MJH, June 27, 1927, Todd to MJH, August 14, 1927, Box 24, MJH-NU; MJH to A. Irving Hallowell, July 4, 1927, Box 9, MJH-NU.
24. Philip Schoenberg, Cleveland, to MJH, November 11, 1930, MJH to Schoenberg, December 2, 1930, Box 23, MJH-NU.
25. MJH to Herbert J. Seligmann, NAACP, October 8, 1928, Box 21, MJH-NU.
26. Seligmann to MJH, October 15, 1928, MJH to Seligmann, October 22, 1928, Box 21, MJH-NU.

27. Much of the literature on the World War I era disillusionment of social scientists with reformist activity has ignored the anthropologists, instead focusing on the activities of sociologists, political scientists, and journalists. For example, see Fisher, *Fundamental Development*; Smith, *Social Science*; Karl, *Uneasy State*; Bannister, *Sociology and Scientism*; Lyons, *Uneasy Partnership*.
28. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 653.
29. Herskovits, "Applied Anthropology," 215.
30. Herskovits, "Applied Anthropology," 220.
31. Herskovits, "Applied Anthropology," 221.
32. MJH to Wingate Todd, March 17, 1936, Box 24, MJH-NU; Herskovits, "Applied Anthropology," 222.
33. Herskovits, "Applied Anthropology," 222.
34. MJH to Mrs. M. L. Rhone, Omaha Social Settlement House, February 19, 1932, Box 20, MJH-NU.
35. MJH to Wingate Todd, March 17, 1936, Box 24, MJH-NU.
36. Herskovits, review of *Man's Most Dangerous Myth*.
37. Gorman, *Left Intellectuals*, 96–98; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 130.
38. Herskovits, "Applied Anthropology," 222.
39. MJH to M. I. Finkelstein, secretary, American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, October 23, 1929, Box 3, MJH-NU.
40. Morris R. Cohen to MJH, January 24, 1934, Box 6, MJH-NU.
41. "Experts Review Negro Prejudice," *Daily Northwestern*, December 7, 1938, MJH-SC.
42. MJH to Franklyn Snyder, March 8, 1947, Box 40, MJH-NU.
43. "Security Investigation Data Form."
44. MJH to A. D. Peterson, Cosmos Club, May 21, 1943, Box 30, MJH-NU.
45. MJH to Edith Elliot, Board of Fellowships in the Biological Sciences, NRC, January 27, 1926, Box 14, MJH-NU; Herskovits, "Bush Negroes of Suriname"; Jackson, "Melville Herskovits," 105–6.
46. Smith, *Social Science*, 95. Smith observes that foundations ignored political scientists during the 1920s because foundations did not want to fund studies that might seek to reform the political order.
47. Mintz, introduction to *Myth of the Negro Past*, ix.
48. "Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations of the Committee on Problems and Policies of the SSRC held in Washington, January 22, 1927," "Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations, Committee Minutes, 1926–1929," Accession 1, Series 1.19, Box 173, Social Science Research Council Papers, Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter cited as SSRC Papers).
49. Fisher, *Fundamental Development*, 111–12.

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50. Fisher, *Fundamental Development*, 112.
51. Fisher, *Fundamental Development*, 53–54.
52. MJH to Dr. Charles E. Merriam, chairman, Social Research Council, February 13, 1926, Box 22, MJH-NU.
53. MJH to Edith Elliot, January 27, 1926, Box 14, MJH-NU.
54. Herskovits received support from anthropologists John R. Swanton, Fay Cooper Cole, and Ronald Dixon. MJH to Todd, November 3, 1926, Box 24, MJH-NU.
55. Smith, *Social Science*, 35, 254; Fisher, *Fundamental Development*, 41–44, 241–42.
56. MJH to Edith Elliot, January 27, 1926, Box 14, MJH-NU.
57. MJH to Todd, November 10, 1926, Box 24, MJH-NU.
58. Joseph Greenberg, interview by Walter A. Jackson, Stanford CA, December 30, 1978, tape recording in Jackson's possession.
59. "Minutes of the SSRC, April 6, 1929," Accession 1, Series 9, Box 350, SSRC Papers.
60. Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 113–14; A. V. Kidder, chairman, Division of Anthropology and Psychology, NRC, to Boas, October 19, 1926, Boas to T. W. Todd, November 3, 1926, Reel 27, Boas Papers; MJH to Spero, January 4, 1927, Box 22, MJH-NU.
61. Stocking, *Selected Papers*, 11.
62. Abrahams, foreword to *Wealth and Rebellion*, x; Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion*, 1–14.
63. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, xiv; Boas to MJH, May 15, 1930, Box 3, MJH-NU. After receiving funding for the Dahomey book, Herskovits wrote Ralph Bunche, "It is always amusing to see the inside wheels turn, though they haven't as much grease [Rockefeller] these days as they had in the good old times." MJH to Bunche, October 22, 1937, Bunche Papers, Schomburg Center.
64. Fisher, *Fundamental Development*, 94, 184, 202–3, 270–71.
65. Stocking, *Selected Papers*, 11–12.
66. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, ix; MJH to Boas, September 6, 1933, Boas to MJH, November 28, 1933, Box 4, MJH-NU; Keppel to MJH, January 17, 1936, Keppel to MJH, August 12, 1937, Box 5, MJH-NU; EG to Keppel, internal memo, December 1, 1936, Series 1, Box 278, CCG Files; Secretary to Treasurer, Grant Form, Carnegie Corp., August 23, 1937, Series 1, Box 278, CCG Files.
67. MJH to Boas, November 23, 1927, Boas Papers; Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 890–91.
68. William F. Ogburn, chairman, Committee on Problems and Policy, SSRC, to MJH, October 17, 1928, MJH to Ogburn, October 22, 1928, Box 17, MJH-NU.

69. “Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations of the Committee on Problems and Policies of the SSRC, May 19, 1929.” The projects were “A Proposed Further Study of the Comparative Abilities of Whites and Negroes” by C. W. Telford and “An Investigation of Hereditary and Social Influences on Individual Differences” by Howard H. Long.
70. See extensive correspondence between Young and Herskovits, Box 22, MJH-NU.
71. Greenberg, interview.
72. MJH to Keppel, October 7, 1938, Box 169, CCG Files; Keppel to MJH, March 31, 1939, Box 5, MJH-NU.
73. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, vii–viii.
74. Philip Mosely to Herskovits, April 8, 1941, Box 20, MJH-NU; Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 134–36.
75. MJH to J. H. Willits, Rockefeller Foundation, April 10, 1941, Box 20, MJH-NU.
76. MJH to Franklin Snyder, NU, April 29, 1941, H. M. Gillette, Assistant Comptroller, Rockefeller Foundation to Dr. Fred D. Fagg Jr., Dean of Faculties, NU, June 24, 1941, Box 20, MJH-NU; “Social Sciences Special Grant In Aid Action No. Ra. ss4138 Northwestern University—Prof. Melville Herskovits,” June 11, 1941, Rockefeller Foundation Papers, Record Group 1.1 Projects, Series 216 Illinois, Box 20, Folder 271, Rockefeller Archive Center.
77. From 1919 through the 1930s anthropology became an academic discipline at a number of colleges including Northwestern University and the Universities of Chicago, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Washington. The anthropology departments became more social science oriented toward sociology and less oriented toward biology, and more influenced by British anthropology and functionalism. Stocking, *Selected Papers*, 11.
78. MJH to Boas, July 14, 1927, Boas Papers. Herskovits also taught courses in introductory anthropology, sociology, and social organization.
79. “Proceedings: Conference on Negro Studies Called by the American Council of Learned Societies,” March 29–30, 1940, Howard University, Washington DC, 207–8, Box 2, MJH-NU; Henry, *Ralph Bunche*, 63; Goggin, “Countering White Racist Scholarship”; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 109, 146. The first formal course in black history was offered at a white college in 1937 by Max Yergan, former YMCA secretary to South Africa and the first black instructor at City College of New York. The next known black history course at a white college was not introduced until 1956 by Leslie H. Fishel Jr. at Oberlin College. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 109, 146. Until 1980 the *American Historical Review* published only one article by a black historian, W. E. B. Du Bois, and prior to 1945 no articles by black historians were published in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. White historians such as

- Herbert Aptheker who wrote on black subjects saw their submissions generally rejected. Other historians, like August Meier and Rayford Logan, who recognized the bias against black history, did not even bother to submit articles to the mainstream journals. Goggin, “Countering White Racist Scholarship,” 355–75. When white historians wrote about or lectured about blacks, they generally treated them as racially or culturally inferior to whites. The premier white historian of slavery, U. B. Phillips, justified slavery as necessary due to blacks’ “barbarous traits, menacing behavior, and reluctance to work.” Dillon, *Ulrich Bonnell Phillips*, 61, 111–12.
80. McKee, *Sociology*, 133, 342–43.
  81. This folklore was “appropriated by promoters of the New Negro movement to fashion their identity in terms of African cultural continuities.” Baker, *From Savage to Negro*, 6, 143–67.
  82. “Proceedings: Conference on Negro Studies Called by the American Council of Learned Societies,” 207–8.
  83. Gilpin, “Charles S. Johnson.”
  84. Platt, *E. Franklin Frazier*.
  85. Ford, *Black Studies*, 52. A survey of fourteen black colleges revealed that during the 1921–22 school year, only fifteen courses concerned with the black experience were taught. Six of the colleges taught no black studies courses at all. By the 1931–32 school year, however, fifteen black colleges surveyed taught forty-three such courses, and ten years later the number was sixty-five. Woodson taught the first course at Howard in black history in 1919. In 1911–12 George E. Haynes began a black history course at Fisk University, while Benjamin Brawley first taught a black history course at Atlanta Baptist College in 1912–13. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 7–8.
  86. MJH to Wingate Todd, March 30, 1930, Box 24, MJH-NU; Atlas, *Bellow*, 49.
  87. David H. Stevens, memorandum, attending Modern Language Association meetings at Northwestern, December 30, 1937, Series 1.4, Box 640, General Education Board Papers, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Pocantico Hills NY (hereafter cited as GEB Papers).
  88. MJH to William Duryee, August 31, 1936, Box 7, MJH-NU.
  89. MJH to President Walter Dill Scott, NU, February 20, 1933, Scott to MJH, March 3, 1933, MJH-NU.
  90. MJH to Boas, November 2, 1929, MJH to Boas, April 28, 1938, Box 4, MJH-NU. Herskovits had been promoted to full professor in 1935. MJH to Boas, June 25, 1935, Box 4, MJH-NU.
  91. “Northwestern University, Salary Schedule, Anthropology Department,” Box 17, MJH-NU.
  92. MJH to Todd, October 22, 1931, Box 24, MJH-NU.

93. MJH to Dr. Gilberto Freyre, August 6, 1935, Box 7, MJH-NU; Herskovits, "Social History of the Negro."
94. MJH to Dr. Gilberto Freyre, August 6, 1935.
95. MJH to Roger Baldwin, July 10, 1925, Box 3, MJH-NU. Herskovits acknowledged the work of all four assistants in the preface of *The American Negro*. King later served as assistant historian, United States Museum at Gettysburg, after appointment by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. Du Bois to MJH, May 31, 1935, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Microfilm at Duke University, Durham NC (hereafter cited as Du Bois Papers). Locke to MJH, April 14, 1924, Box 13, MJH-NU.
96. Boas to Woodson, November 18, 1926, Woodson to Boas, November 19, 1926, Woodson to Boas, November 23, 1926, Reel 27, Boas Papers.
97. MJH to Roger Baldwin, Garland Fund, July 10, 1925, Box 3, MJH-NU; MJH to Boas, March 3, 1925, Boas Papers.
98. MJH to American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) (re: Frazier application for fellowship), January 16, 1940, Box 7, MJH-NU; MJH to Waldo G. Leland, (ACLS), March 12, 1940, Leland to MJH, March 6, 1940, Box 25, MJH-NU; Turner to MJH, November 7, 1955, MJH to Turner, November 15, 1955, Box 73, MJH-NU.
99. Drake, "Diaspora Studies," 486.
100. MJH to Dr. H. L. Harris, Rosenwald Fund, December 6, 1929, Box 20, MJH-NU; MJH to Jackson Davis, General Education Board, January 27, 1930, Davis to MJH, February 18, 1930, Box 5, MJH-NU. Davis did not offer any funding because Cameron was "married and we have no assurance of her employment in the faculty of any institution which needs our assistance."
101. Cameron, "Folk Beliefs."
102. Herskovits recommendation to SSRC for Hugh H. Smythe, ca. December 15, 1940, Box 22, MJH-NU.
103. Hugh H. Smythe to Hon. Secretary of State, Department of State, July 16, 1941; Herskovits to Richard Pattee, Division of Cultural Relations, Department of State, July 23, 1941; A. M. Warren, Chief, Visa Division, Department of State, to Hugh H. Smythe, August 20, 1941; Albert H. Cousins, American Legation, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to John H. Cabot, Division of the American Republics, Department of State, September 9, 1941; William M. Schurz, Acting Assistant Chief, Division of Cultural Relations, Department of State, to Hugh H. Smythe, November 7, 1941; Smythe to Pattee, April 5, 1942; all in Record Group 59, Box 14, National Archives, Washington DC.
104. Herskovits to Conference Board of Associated Research Councils, October 2, 1950, Box 54, MJH-NU.
105. "Biographical Notes, Hugh H. Smythe," in Finding Aid, Hugh H. and Mabel M. Smythe, "A Register of their Papers in the Library of Congress,"

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prepared by T. Michael Womack with the assistance of Patricia Craig, Sheila Day, and Susie Moody, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC, 1994.

106. Cole, *Conversations*, 18–22. Cole, then Johnnetta Betsch, won a fellowship of \$2,500 in anthropology at Northwestern for the 1960–61 academic year along with four other students. MJH to Dean Moody Prior, Graduate School, March 14, 1960, Box 88, MJH-NU. Cole later served as president of Spelman College, Atlanta.
107. Ottenberg, “Thirty Years of Fieldnotes,” 139–40. See also correspondence between Simon Ottenberg, Phoebe Ottenberg (Simon’s wife and also a graduate student in anthropology at Northwestern), and Herskovits, Box 57 (1950–51), MJH-NU.
108. Greenberg, “On Being a Linguistic Anthropologist.”
109. Hyatt, *Franz Boas*, 137.
110. Ottenberg, “Thirty Years of Fieldnotes,” 151.
111. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 10.
112. Edwin Embree, President, Julius Rosenwald Fund, to MJH, May 8, 1935, MJH to Embree, November 11, 1935, MJH to Embree, May 27, 1936, Box 20, MJH-NU.
113. Frank L. Hayes, “Haitian Voodoo Dance Thrills Savants of Chicago Schools,” *Chicago Daily News*, June 5, 1936, MJH-NU.
114. Henry, *Ralph Bunche*, 76–77.
115. Huggins, “Ralph Bunche,” 72–73, 78–81.
116. MJH to Franklyn Snyder, February 10, 1947, Box 40, MJH-NU.
117. MJH to Rayford Logan, October 27, 1954, Logan to MJH, December 15, 1954, MJH to Logan, December 23, 1954, Box 67, MJH-NU.
118. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, vii.
119. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 59–62.
120. Herskovits, “Social History of the Negro,” 258–59, 227–30.
121. Herskovits, “Preliminary Memorandum.”
122. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 107–8; Wish quoted on 108. Wish expressed his debt to Herskovits in Wish, “Slave Disloyalty,” 435n. See also Wish, “American Slave Insurrections.”
123. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 108; Bauer and Bauer, “Day to Day Resistance”; MJH to Swados, September 15, 1942, Box 23, MJH-NU. A number of Herskovits’s students published articles in the 1941 *Journal of Negro History*. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 114. See *Journal of Negro History* 26 (October 1941): 415.
124. MJH to Swados, September 15, 1942, Box 23, MJH-NU.
125. Herskovits, “Guggenheim Fellowship, Report on Herbert Aptheker, Nov.

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- 20, 1944,” Box 32, MJH-NU; Aptheker to MJH, October 29, 1945, Box 32, MJH-NU; Aptheker to author, December 17, 1998, letter in the author’s possession.
126. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 107–8.
127. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 240–41.
128. “Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations of the Committee on Problems and Policies of the SSRC, May 19, 1929.” The other members were M. S. Viteles and T. J. Woofter Jr. This subcommittee of the Committee on Interracial Relations was dissolved in September 1930. Edwin B. Wilson, President, SSRC, to MJH, September 30, 1930, Box 22, MJH-NU.
129. Henry, *Ralph Bunche*, 75–76.
130. Henry, *Ralph Bunche*, 77. Another time, Bunche commented that once “when he had lunch at the faculty club with some colleagues, Herskovits came to their table, ‘red and shame-faced after his meal was finished’; Herskovits had never invited Bunche to dine with him at the faculty club.” Henry, *Ralph Bunche*, 77.
131. Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, x.
132. Stanfield, *Philanthropy and Jim Crow*, 6.
133. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 277.
134. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 752.
135. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 183.
136. Woodson quoted in Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 289.
137. Woodson removed Jones from the ASNLH executive council. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 59–63, 81–83; Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 125–26. See also Du Bois’s critique of Jones’s 1917 report on Negro education. Du Bois, “Negro Education,” 878.
138. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 94, 174–78.
139. MJH to Wingate Todd, November 10, 1926, Box 24, MJH-NU.
140. MJH to Boas, October 5, 1929, Box 3, MJH-NU.
141. Woodson to MJH, October 10, 1929, Box 11, MJH-NU.
142. According to Meier and Rudwick, Rayford Logan researched and wrote most of *African Background Outlined*. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 91; Woodson, *African Background Outlined*.
143. Woodson, *African Background Outlined*; Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 128.
144. Woodson, *African Background Outlined*.
145. MJH to Young, September 26, 1936, Box 22, MJH-NU.
146. Herskovits, review of *African Background Outlined*.
147. Herskovits, review of *African Background Outlined*.
148. Herskovits, review of *African Background Outlined*.
149. Woodson, *African Background Outlined*, 152.



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150. Herskovits's friend Donald Young, of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, turned down Woodson's review due to excessive length. Young to MJH, May 5, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
151. Woodson, "Dr. Melville J. Herskovits' Method Examined"; Young to MJH, May 5, 1937, Box 22, MJH-NU.
152. Woodson, "Dr. Melville J. Herskovits' Method Examined."
153. Woodson, "Dr. Melville J. Herskovits' Method Examined."
154. MJH to Woodson, July 20, 1943, Box 28, MJH-NU.
155. Du Bois to MJH, October 12, 1960, Box 88, MJH-NU; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, 379–80.
156. Anson Phelps Stokes to 22 invitees (Dear Sir), October 19, 1931, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 17; Sitkoff, *New Deal for Blacks*, 23; Tindall, *Emergence of the New South*, 177–83.
157. Minutes of the "Conference on the Advisability of Publishing an Encyclopedia of the Negro," Washington DC, November 7, 1931, Reel 35, Du Bois Papers; Charles S. Johnson to Franklin Frazier, July 20, 1932, Box 131, Folder 14, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.
158. Anson Phelps Stokes to 22 invitees (Dear Sir), October 19, 1931, Stokes to Jackson Davis, GEB, March 31, 1932, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers.
159. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 59–63, 81–83; Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 125–26.
160. Minutes of the "Conference on the Advisability of Publishing an Encyclopedia of the Negro."
161. Woodson to Brawley, November 28, 1931, Box 139, CCG Files; Woodson to Du Bois, January 7, 1932, Woodson to Du Bois, February 11, 1932, Reel 37, Du Bois Papers; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 57–58; Woodson, "Duplication of Effort."
162. Du Bois to James H. Dillard, November 30, 1931, Dillard to Du Bois, December 2, 1931, in Aptheker, *Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 447–48; Du Bois to Stokes, December 9, 1931, "Memorandum to the Conference on the Advisability of Publishing a Negro Encyclopedia," December 9, 1931, Du Bois to Stokes, December 17, 1931, Reel 35, Du Bois Papers; Minutes, "Encyclopedia of the Negro," March 12, 1932, Board of Directors meeting, Reel 37, Du Bois Papers; Stokes to MJH, February 2, 1940, Box 7, MJH-NU; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 57–58. The final quotation is from a letter from Stokes to Jackson Davis, GEB, April 21, 1932, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers.
163. The members of the Advisory Council of the Encyclopedia were the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, American Council on Education, National Research Council, American Council of Learned Societies, Hampton

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- Institute, Tuskegee Institute, Atlanta University (Rayford Logan), Howard University, Fisk University, and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. “Memorandum on the ‘Encyclopedia of the Negro,’ Reprint of March 1936, with footnotes, appendices and Report of Progress to Date,” Box 7, MJH-NU.
164. Leland to MJH, March 29, 1934, Box 2, MJH-NU.
165. MJH to Leland, April 2, 1934, Box 2, MJH-NU.
166. Leland to MJH, April 4, 1934, Box 2, MJH-NU.
167. MJH to Du Bois, October 11, 1935, Box 7, MJH-NU; Du Bois to David H. Stevens, GEB, December 2, 1937, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers. In 1935 Herskovits advised Du Bois that the section on Africa should emphasize West Africa, adding that he would be happy to prepare articles on a number of subjects, including race and race crossing, West Africa, and the Bush Negroes of Suriname.
168. Du Bois wrote to numerous experts and leading scholars and journalists asking for their opinion of the encyclopedia project. Although many responded in the positive, few proposed black control of the project. One of the few who did was H. L. Mencken, outspoken editor of the popular magazine *American Mercury*. Mencken supported the encyclopedia’s being published “as soon as possible.” Moreover he “suggest[ed] that if possible it ought to be done principally by Negroes — indeed, it would be best if it could be done wholly by Negroes.” H. L. Mencken to Du Bois, October 11, 1935, abstract, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers.
169. MJH to Parsons, June 8, 1936, Box 18, MJH-NU.
170. MJH to Young, July 8, 1936, Box 22, MJH-NU.
171. MJH to Young, April 3, 1936, Young to MJH, April 7, 1936, MJH to Young, April 15, 1936, Box 22, MJH-NU.
172. MJH to Young, June 8, 1936, Box 22, MJH-NU.
173. MJH to Parsons, June 8, 1936, Box 18, MJH-NU.
174. Parsons to MJH, June 11, 1936, Box 18, MJH-NU.
175. MJH to Parsons, August 23, 1936, Box 18, MJH-NU.
176. Minutes, “Encyclopedia of the Negro,” March 12, 1932. Du Bois was a member of the board and of the Executive Committee. The other Executive Committee members were Stokes, chair; Robert Moton and James Dillard, first and second vice chairs; Benjamin Brawley, secretary; Mordecai Johnson; and C. T. Loram. Stokes to Du Bois, March 29, 1932, Stokes to Park, March 31, 1932, “The Negro Encyclopedia,” n.d., 1932, Reel 37, Du Bois Papers.
177. Frazier to Du Bois, October 26, 1935, Reel 44, Du Bois Papers; Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 93–94; Frazier to Du Bois, November 7, 1936, in Aptheker, *Correspondence . . . Volume II*, 71–72; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 437.
178. Young, *Black Writers*, x, 3–5, 15–17, 20, 24–25, 41–61.

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179. “British Broadcasting Corporation, London, England, America To-Day.”
180. Minutes, “Encyclopedia of the Negro,” March 12, 1932.
181. Stokes to Board members, August 2, 1938, Box 7, MJH-NU.
182. MJH to Stokes, September 22, 1938, Box 7, MJH-NU.
183. In April 1934 Stokes submitted requests for \$100,000 from the GEB and \$100,000 from the Carnegie Corp. based on a total budget of \$225,000 for four years. Stokes to Trevor Arnett, President, GEB, April 16, 1934, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers.
184. Davis to Stokes, April 19, 1932, Davis to Trevor Arnett, GEB, April 9, 1932, Davis to Stokes, April 3, 1937, “Excerpt from DHS — Diary, Atlanta University, April 28, 1934,” Jackson Davis and David H. Stevens, GEB, Memorandum on “The Encyclopedia of the Negro,” April 28, 1934, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers.
185. Keppel to R. M. Lester, internal memo, n.d., May 1934?, Box 139, CCG Files.
186. Alvin Johnson to Keppel, April 28, 1934, Box 139, CCG Files.
187. “Report of Progress, Encyclopedia of the Negro, March 20, 1936,” Box 7, MJH-NU.
188. Du Bois to MJH, February 27, 1939, Box 7, MJH-NU.
189. Herskovits to Du Bois, March 3, 1939, Box 7, MJH-NU.
190. Herskovits to Du Bois, draft of letter, n.d., 1940?, Box 7, MJH-NU.
191. “Encyclopedia of the Negro: Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, December 9, 1939,” Logan Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.
192. “Encyclopedia of the Negro: Minutes.”
193. “Encyclopedia of the Negro: Minutes.”
194. Stokes to MJH, February 2, 1940, MJH to Stokes, February 20, 1940, Box 7, MJH-NU.
195. Stokes to MJH, March 6, 1940, Box 7, MJH-NU.
196. Madison Bentley to MJH, February 5, 1940, MJH to Bentley, Library of Congress, February 8, 1940, Box 7, MJH-NU.
197. Interview, Stokes and Davis, GEB, March 31, 1941, Stokes to Davis, April 22, 1941, Davis to W. W. Alexander, April 25, 1941, Davis to Stokes, May 20, 1941, Series 1.3, Box 418, GEB Papers; Dollard and Stokes, interview, April 1, 1941, Box 139, CCG Files.
198. Davis and Dollard, interview, April 24, 1941, Series 1.3, Box 418, Folder 4387, GEB Papers.
199. Rayford Logan Diary, 1950–51, February 14, 1951, entry, Box 5, Rayford W. Logan Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington DC.
200. Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 93–95.
201. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 447.
202. Herskovits to Donald Young, SSRC, January 2, 1936, probably 1937, Box 22,

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- MJH-NU; Dollard to Keppel, memo, July 23, 1942, with quote from October 24, 1935, minutes of Board of Trustees meeting, Negro Study General Correspondence, Reel 91, Carnegie Corp. of NY Papers, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 16–22.
203. MJH to Pvt. Edmond Sager, Fort Benning GA, February 22, 1944, Box 30, MJH-NU.
204. MJH to Waldo Leland, ACLS, Box 2, January 10, 1939; Herskovits, “Memorandum on the Desirability of Holding a Conference on Negro Studies,” January 20, 1939, Box 2, MJH-NU; MJH to Graves, December 1, 1939, Mortimer Graves, ACLS, to MJH, November 7, 1939, Leland to MJH, May 28, 1941, Box 2, MJH-NU. The original idea for this conference was suggested by Leland to Herskovits in December 1938.
205. MJH to Waldo Leland, ACLS, Box 2, January 10, 1939; Herskovits, “Memorandum on the Desirability of Holding a Conference on Negro Studies.”
206. MJH to Dr. Mortimer Graves, ACLS, May 17, 1939, MJH to Waldo Leland, ACLS, January 10, 1939, MJH to Graves, December 1, 1939, MJH to Graves, December 19, 1939, Box 2, MJH-NU.
207. MJH to Graves, January 9, 1940, Box 2, MJH-NU.
208. MJH to Bunche, January 9, 1940, MJH to Graves, March 5, 1940, Bunche to MJH, March 16, 1940, Box 2, MJH-NU.
209. Woodson to MJH, February 20, 1940, Box 2, MJH-NU.
210. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, 137.
211. Myrdal to Bunche, January 18, 1940, Bunche Papers, Schomburg Center.
212. Myrdal to Bunche, January 18, 1940.
213. “Proceedings: Conference on Negro Studies Called by the American Council of Learned Societies,” 11, 226–27. The Encyclopedia of the Negro project was not discussed either.
214. MJH to Bunche, January 9, 1940, MJH to Graves, March 5, 1940, Bunche to MJH, March 16, 1940, Leland to MJH, January 12, 1939, Daugherty to MJH, May 20, 1941, MJH to Leland, May 26, 1941, MJH to Leland, April 1, 1940, Leland to MJH, February 3, 1941, Box 2, MJH-NU; “Proceedings: Conference on Negro Studies Called by the American Council of Learned Societies,” 192.
215. “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of meeting of November 10 and 11, 1944,” Donald Goodchild, Box 32, MJH-NU. Reddick’s 1939 dissertation was entitled “The Negro in the New Orleans Press, 1850–1860.” Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 103.
216. Goodchild, “Committee on Negro Studies”; Olson to MJH, April 18, 1945, Box 32, MJH-NU.
217. W. W. Brierly, GEB, to Waldo G. Leland, Director, ACLS, October 24, 1945, Series 1.2, Box 256, Folder 2652, GEB Papers; Daugherty, “Reports of Committees and Projects, 1948 Report.”

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218. “Reports of Committees and Projects . . . 1947 Report.”
219. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 233.
220. Daugherty to members of Committee, August 31, 1948, sent October 2, 1948, Box 43, MJH-NU; D. H. Daugherty, “Reports: Committee on Negro Studies, 1949 Report.” The microfilming project continued into 1951, even after the dissolution of the committee. Daugherty to MJH, February 7, 1951, Box 51, MJH-NU.
221. James F. King to MJH, May 19, 1945, Box 32, MJH-NU; D. H. Daugherty, “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of Meeting of 7 February 1946,” Box 32, MJH-NU.
222. MJH to Williams, September 10, 1943, MJH to Goodchild, November 17, 1943, Goodchild to Williams, September 17, 1943, Goodchild to Couch, September 17, 1943, Box 27, MJH-NU. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 104.
223. MJH to Daugherty, September 9, 1946, Box 37, MJH-NU; “Reports of Committees and Projects . . . 1947 Report.”
224. Daugherty, “Reports of Committees and Projects, 1949 Report.”
225. Daugherty, “Reports of Committees and Projects, 1948 Report.”
226. Daugherty, “Reports of Committees and Projects, 1948 Report”; “Proceedings: Conference on Negro Studies Called by the American Council of Learned Societies,” 199–200.
227. “Proceedings: Conference on Negro Studies Called by the American Council of Learned Societies,” 199–200.
228. Aptheker to Gershenhorn, December 17, 1998, letter in the author’s possession.
229. “Summary of the Findings and Recommendations of the Conference on Negro Studies, March 29–30, 1940,” sent by Daugherty to committee members, June 3, 1941, Box 2, MJH-NU.
230. Reddick, “Library Facilities,” 128.
231. “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of meeting of November 10 and 11, 1944.”
232. MJH to Leland, February 6, 1941, MJH to Leland, March 3, 1941, Mortimer Graves, Administrative Secretary, ACLS, to MJH, April 25, 1941, Box 2, MJH-NU.
233. MJH to D. H. Daugherty, ACLS, April 7, 1941, Box 2, MJH-NU.
234. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 103.
235. MJH to Daugherty, ACLS, May 12, 1941, Box 2, MJH-NU. He advised calling Sterling Brown to make lunch arrangements. Noting “further than this, I don’t think we have to concern ourselves,” Herskovits avoided the question of segregated accommodations.
236. MJH to Dougherty, May 31, 1941, Box 2, MJH-NU.

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237. Logan to Wallace K. Harrison, Director of Cultural Relations Division, OCIAA, October 20, 1941, Record Group 229, Box 411, Inter-American Conference on Negro Studies Folder, National Archives, Washington DC (hereafter cited as RG 229 / 411, National Archives); Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 134–37. For a discussion of Logan's generally disappointing experience with the OCIAA, see Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 136–39.
238. Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 142.
239. D. H. Daugherty to John M. Clark, Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, January 13, 1942, RG 229 / 411, National Archives. Charles Thompson, Chairman, Joint Committee on Cultural Relations to Mrs. Nina P. Collier, Acting Secretary, Joint Committee on Cultural Relations, October 31, 1941; Daugherty, "Committee on Negro Studies"; MJH to Henry Field, January 2, 1943, Box 28, MJH-NU.
240. Logan Diary, 1941, December 22, 1941, entry, Rayford Logan Papers, Box 3, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington DC.
241. D. H. Daugherty to John M. Clark, January 13, 1942, RG 229 / 411, National Archives.
242. Logan Diary, 1942, January 13, 1942, entry, Rayford Logan Papers, Box 3, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington DC; Daugherty to Levy, December 4, 1941, Levy to Daugherty, December 8, 1941, Daugherty to Levy, January 2, 1942, Rockefeller to Leland, January 8, 1942, RG 229 / 411, National Archives.
243. Logan to Clark, February 2, 1942, RG 229 / 411, National Archives.
244. Leland to Clark, February 13, 1942, RG 229 / 411, National Archives; Handwritten Notes: "Conference on Negro Studies: Port-au-Prince, Selection of Members of Conference," n.d., Nelson Rockefeller to Leland, March 6, 1942, RG 229 / 411, National Archives; Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 143. Subsequently, the ACLS decided to cancel the Haiti conference because many of the delegates could not attend for various reasons, including illness, government service, and transportation problems related to the Second World War. The OCIAA then canceled the funding contract, and the conference was never held. Leland to John M. Clark, March 21, 1942, RG 229 / 411, National Archives; Daugherty, "Committee on Negro Studies."
245. Hugh H. Smythe to Rayford Logan, May 24, 1943, Rayford Logan to Hugh H. Smythe, June 2, 1943, Box 166, Rayford Logan Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.
246. Herskovits to Leland, June 24, 1944, Box 27, MJH-NU; Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 80; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 106.
247. Goodchild to MJH, September 18, 1944, MJH to Goodchild, September 22, 1944, Box 32, MJH-NU. ACLS official D. H. Daugherty suggested Paul Robeson as a possible replacement. However, another ACLS official, Donald Good-

- child, told Herskovits that although he did not disapprove of radicals, he opposed the idea “on the ground that I don’t believe you can fool around with American Communists very much and still maintain a claim to intellectual integrity?”
248. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 75, 78, 80; Hine, *State of Afro-American History*, 286.
249. A few months after Herskovits’s assertion of ignorance of other prominent black historians, when Herskovits began to create a list of scholars working in the field of Negro studies he sent questionnaires to a number of black historians, including Franklin, Greene, Logan, Eric Williams, and Benjamin Quarles, demonstrating his familiarity with them. MJH, form letter to scholars, ACLS, CONS, n.d., 1945, Box 32, MJH-NU; “Names of those who answered questionnaire of Committee on Negro Studies, of the American Council of Learned Societies,” n.d., 1945, Box 32, MJH-NU.
250. ACLS-CONS questionnaire form completed by Donald Goodchild, “Data for Personnel List of those conducting studies of the Negro,” n.d., 1945, Box 32, MJH-NU.
251. Goodchild to MJH, January 22, 1946, Box 32, MJH-NU.
252. Daugherty, “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of Meeting of 7 February 1946.”
253. “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of meeting of November 10 and 11, 1944.”
254. Daugherty, “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of Meeting of 7 February 1946.”
255. MJH to Daugherty, February 24, 1947, MJH to Daugherty, March 18, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU.
256. MJH to Daugherty, March 18, 1947, Daugherty to MJH, April 4, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU.
257. Daugherty to MJH, June 10, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU.
258. Daugherty to MJH, July 8, 1948, Box 37, MJH-NU.
259. Daugherty to MJH, May 12, 1949, MJH to Daugherty, May 17, 1949, Daugherty to MJH, May 24, 1949, Box 43, MJH-NU.
260. Charles E. Odegaard, Executive Director, ACLS, to Pride, July 14, 1949, Box 43, MJH-NU. The black majority contradicts Robert L. Harris Jr.’s statement that the committee’s “black membership was always outnumbered.” Harris, “Segregation and Scholarship,” 325.
261. MJH to Daugherty, July 12, 1948, Box 37, MJH-NU; MJH to Daugherty, September 30, 1948, Box 43, MJH-NU.
262. Daugherty, “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of Meeting of 7 February 1946”; D. H. Daugherty, “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of

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- Meeting of 15 October 1946,” Box 37, MJH-NU; Daugherty to MJH, January 6, 1950, Box 47, MJH-NU.
263. Daugherty to MJH, September 27, 1948, Box 43, MJH-NU.
264. MJH to Daugherty, January 23, 1950, MJH to Daugherty, March 22, 1950, Box 47, MJH-NU.
265. Daugherty to MJH, March 29, 1950, Box 47, MJH-NU; Daugherty to MJH, February 7, 1951, Box 51, MJH-NU.
266. MJH to Daugherty, February 15, 1951, Box 51, MJH-NU.
267. Daugherty to MJH, February 7, 1951, Box 51, MJH-NU.
268. Harris, “Segregation and Scholarship,” 329.
269. Charles E. Odegaard to MJH, August 11, 1950, Box 47, MJH-NU.
270. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 4–5.
271. McKee, *Sociology*, 4.
272. Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 143.

## 6. The Postwar Expansion of African Studies

1. Conroy, “Meet Melville Herskovits.”
2. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 63.
3. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 63.
4. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 653.
5. Conroy, “Meet Melville Herskovits.”
6. McCaughey, *International Studies*, 102–9.
7. Berman, *Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations*, 101.
8. Mahoney, *JFK*, 34–35; Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 30.
9. Chamberlain and Hoebel, “Anthropology Offerings.”
10. Voegelin, “Anthropology in American Universities,” 357, 365, 387; Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 13.
11. Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 14.
12. Aptheker, introduction to *The Negro*, 10–15; Vansina, *Living with Africa*, 43.
13. Du Bois quoted in Hyatt, *Franz Boas*, 99.
14. Du Bois, *The Negro*.
15. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*; Woodson, *African Background Outlined*.
16. Harris, *Africa and Africans*, ix–x.
17. Alford, “Prophet without Honor,” 89. In 1943 Hansberry asserted that Howard’s “African Studies program represents the most original, distinctive and potentially significant endeavor in the field of Education which Howard University has yet undertaken in the course of its long and distinguished history,” and “our African History courses are in content and objectives the only undergraduate courses of the kind that are now being offered anywhere in the world.” Edwin W. Smith, “The Proposed African Studies At Fisk,



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- Memorandum No. 2,” March 20, 1943, Davis to Smith, March 25, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers.
18. Bates, *Eastern Libyans*; McCall, “American Anthropology,” 23. Because of the scarcity of American Africanists, most of the authors of Harvard’s series were British.
  19. Emory Ross, “Memorandum on Certain Needed Aids in American-African Relationships” rough draft, November 9, 1948, to MJH, Box 43, MJH-NU.
  20. Carter, “African Studies,” 3.
  21. Vansina, *Living with Africa*, 43.
  22. MJH to Mrs. M. L. Rhone, Omaha Social Settlement House, February 19, 1932, Box 20, MJH-NU. In 1930 Herskovits taught a course entitled “Negro, African and American,” during the summer session at the University of Wisconsin. FBI Report on Melville J. Herskovits of SA, June 30, 1961, File No. MI 161–77, Milwaukee Office, Received after FOIA request.
  23. Stocking, *Selected Papers*, 11–12; Murray, “Non-Eclipse of Americanist Anthropology,” 52, 55, 58–61; Darnell, *And Along Came Boas*, 280–81. From 1927, when Herskovits arrived, through the Second World War, Northwestern issued five anthropology doctorates.
  24. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, 12.
  25. Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 15.
  26. “Program: Forty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association,” December 27–31, 1946, Box 41, MJH-NU.
  27. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 24.
  28. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 25.
  29. MJH to Simeon E. Leland, March 7, 1949, Box 45, MJH-NU.
  30. Vansina, *Living with Africa*, 43–45.
  31. “Address by Dr. C. T. Loram of the Native Affairs Commission, Union of South Africa, on the Occasion of a Dinner Given in His Honour by the Phelps-Stokes Fund of 101 Park Avenue, New York,” Box 11, Folder 155, IEB Papers.
  32. Herskovits, “Missionary Zeal in Africa,” review of *In Sunny Nigeria: Experiences Among a Primitive People in the Interior of North Central Africa*, by Albert D. Helser, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, September 5, 1926, 12, Box 36, MJH-SC.
  33. Herskovits, “Culture Areas of Africa”; Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 8–12; Ruth E. Mugnaini, Los Angeles State College, to MJH, March 13, 1961, MJH to Mugnaini, April 24, 1961, Box 93, MJH-NU.
  34. Herskovits, *Dahomey*, 25; Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 24–25; McKinley, *Lure of Africa*, 150–51.
  35. Bennett, preface to *Area Studies*, iii.
  36. Beals, *Politics of Social Research*, 55.
  37. Stocking, “Ideas and Institutions,” 35.

38. Stocking, “Ideas and Institutions,” 35–36; Patterson, *Social History of Anthropology*, 93–95; Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man*, 168, 172–77; Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 302–26; Lyons, *Uneasy Partnership*, 118–19. Benedict’s study of the Japanese national character was published in 1946 as *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.
39. Simpson, introduction to *Universities and Empire*, xxi–xxi.
40. “Herskovits Returns from Brazil to Teach Anthropology at NU.” *Daily Northwestern*, January 28, 1943, Melville J. Herskovits File, College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Reprints, Biographical Files, NU Archives.
41. Lyons, *Uneasy Partnership*, 112–13; MJH to Max Lowenthal, Chief, Reoccupation Division, Office of Economic Warfare, October 20, 1943, Box 29, MJH-NU.
42. MJH to Pvt. A. Rockefeller, Ft. Monroe VA, student, November 12, 1942, Box 20, MJH-NU; “Herskovits Returns from Brazil.”
43. Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 281–84.
44. Parma Basham, “I’ll Never Forget” June 25, 1975, Melville J. Herskovits File, College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Reprints, Biographical Files, NU Archives.
45. Davis, *Living the Blues*, 290–93.
46. MJH to Frederick Keppel, January 17, 1937, Box 5, MJH-NU.
47. Morris D. Waldman to MJH, May 10, 1935, MJH to Waldman, May 27, 1935, Box 2, MJH-NU.
48. MJH to Prof. Salo Baron, Columbia Univ., July 20, 1933, Box 5, MJH-NU.
49. Samuel A. Goldsmith, Executive Director, the Jewish Charities of Chicago, to MJH, October 12, 1936, MJH to Goldsmith, October 27, 1936, MJH to Horace Kallen, October 27, 1936, MJH to Hallowell, November 7, 1936, Box 9, MJH-NU; Gutmann to MJH, March 9, 1939, MJH to Gutmann, March 31, 1939, Mortimer Graves to MJH, January 24, 1940, Herskovits to Graves, January 27, 1940, Box 2, MJH-NU.
50. Quote from Louis Diamond, M.D., to MJH, November 22, 1938, Box 14, MJH-NU; MJH to Diamond, November 25, 1938, Box 14, MJH-NU.
51. McCaughey, *International Studies*, 122–40.
52. Bennett, preface to *Area Studies*, iii.
53. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 174; “Minutes, Ethnogeographic Board, Fourth Meeting, March 25, 1944,” enclosed with William N. Fenton, Research Associate, Ethnogeographic Board, to MJH, April 8, 1944, Box 27, MJH-NU.
54. “World Regions in the Social Sciences: Report of a Committee of the SSRC,” June 1943, Box 30, MJH-NU.
55. MJH to Robert Crane, SSRC, November 15, 1943, Box 30, MJH-NU.
56. MJH to Harris, June 8, 1947, Box 38, MJH-NU; Robert Redfield, “Area Pro-

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- grams in Education and Research,” April 29–30, 1944, SSRC Conference, Box 30, MJH-NU.
57. “Report of the Committee on African Anthropology,” n.d., March 1943, Box 28, MJH-NU.
  58. On Operation Torch, see Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism*, 20–26.
  59. Bennett, preface to *Area Studies*, iii; “Memorandum on a Joint Committee on Negro and African Studies,” ca. January 1, 1944, Box 27, MJH-NU; MJH to Donald Young, April 28, 1944, Box 30, MJH-NU.
  60. “Report of the Committee on African Anthropology.”
  61. MJH to David Stevens, November 25, 1942, Box 20, MJH-NU.
  62. Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 14.
  63. Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 15.
  64. A “detailed statement covering the technical aspects” of the program was prepared by Fisk anthropologist Mark H. Watkins. Johnson to Davis, October 16, 1942, Series 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers.
  65. Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 15.
  66. Turner was also chair of the English department. Wade-Lewis, “Impact of the Turner/Herskovits Connection,” 392.
  67. Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 15; Johnson to Davis, October 16, 1942, Series 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers.
  68. David H. Stevens and MJH, interview, January 26, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, GEB Papers; MJH to Stevens, November 25, 1942, Box 20, MJH-NU.
  69. David H. Stevens, GEB, and Frances Herskovits, interview, November 21, 1942, Series 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers.
  70. In 1947 Herskovits gave Watkins an unqualified recommendation for appointment to the sociology and anthropology department at Brooklyn College. W. C. Waterman, chair, to MJH, July 1, 1947, MJH to Waterman, July 16, 1947, Box 42, MJH-NU. In 1940 Herskovits gave Turner a strong recommendation on a funding request to the ACLS for a fieldtrip to Brazil. Herskovits noted that although Turner was studying Portuguese, fluency was not essential as he was working on phonetics and grammar. It would only be necessary if he were studying something like social relationships. MJH to Waldo Leland, ACLS, March 12, 1940, MJH to Donald Goodchild, ACLS, Box 25, MJH-NU.
  71. David H. Stevens and MJH, interview, January 26, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, GEB Papers; MJH to Stevens, November 25, 1942, Box 20, MJH-NU; Watkins, *Grammar of Chichewa*. Chichewa, also known as Chinyanja, is spoken in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia.
  72. David H. Stevens and MJH, interview, January 26, 1943; MJH to Stevens, November 25, 1942.
  73. MJH to Stevens, November 25, 1942; David H. Stevens and MJH, interview, January 26, 1943.
  74. A. R. Mann, GEB, to Jackson Davis, GEB, memo, December 11, 1942, Series

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- 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers; Interoffice Correspondence from David Stevens, GEB, February 3, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, GEB Papers.
75. Jackson Davis and Charles S. Johnson, interview, January 26, 1943, David H. Stevens and MJH, interview, January 26, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, GEB Papers.
76. Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 15; Johnson to Davis, October 16, 1942, Series 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers; Thomas E. Jones to Jackson Davis, GEB, February 8, 1943, Thomas E. Jones to Davis, March 2, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, GEB Papers; Jackson Davis, GEB, to Charles S. Johnson, April 9, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers.
77. Jackson Davis and MJH, interview, January 10, 1947, Series 1.4, Box 640, Folder 6702, GEB Papers.
78. Thomas E. Jones to MJH, October 10, 1944, MJH to Jones, October 14, 1944, MJH to Charles S. Johnson, October 18, 1944, Box 33, MJH-NU.
79. The five professors were Mark H. Watkins, anthropology and sociology; Robert E. Park, lecturer on race and culture; Lorenzo Turner; Edwin W. Smith; and Ina C. Brown, lecturer in social anthropology. Thomas E. Jones to Arthur Askey, GEB, April 9, 1945; “Fisk University Program of African Studies,” pamphlet, n.d., Series 1.3, Box 421, GEB Papers.
80. Jackson Davis and MJH, interview, January 10, 1947, Series 1.4, Box 640, Folder 6702, GEB Papers.
81. Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 16.
82. McCall, “American Anthropology,” 30.
83. “American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Negro Studies, Minutes of Meeting of November 10 and 11, 1944.” The Ethnogeographic Board was disbanded after the war. To continue the focus on area studies, the three research councils formed “a joint Exploratory Committee on World Area Research.” Bennett, preface to *Area Studies*, iii.
84. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 22.
85. “Report of the Committee on African Anthropology.”
86. “Agenda: Meeting of Informal Conference to Consider Establishing an African Institute, etc., March 15, 1943”; “Minutes: Meeting of Organizing Committee, International Conference on Africa, March 27, 1943”; “Statement Concerning Agenda for a Conference on Africa, April 19, 1943,” Du Bois Papers; MJH to “Members of the Africa Conference Committee,” April 16, 1945, Du Bois Papers. A few days later Herskovits expressed his regrets to Woodson that “you did not feel it possible to meet with the group that was considering setting up an international conference on Africa. Actually, it was I who made the point that no such meeting would be held if you were not included in the list of those invited to attend. . . . You can be quite sure that as far as I am concerned, it [the conference] is not going to be ‘loaded’ in any

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- direction, for I regard it as a chance to hear and discuss all points of view concerning Africa.” MJH to Woodson, March 31, 1943, Box 28, MJH-NU.
87. “Meeting of Organizing Committee for the International Conference on Africa, April 23, 1943,” Du Bois Papers.
  88. MJH to Du Bois, May 10, 1943, MJH to “Members of the Organizing Committee for an International Conference on Africa,” May 22, 1943, MJH to Du Bois, July 30, 1943, MJH to “Members of the Organizing Committee for an International Conference on Africa,” September 13, 1943, Du Bois Papers.
  89. MJH to “Members of the Africa Conference Committee,” April 16, 1945, Du Bois Papers. Although interest in Africa waned toward the end of the war and during the beginning of the postwar period, there were some indications of sustained interest in Africa. In July 1944 the State Department created a separate Africa section for the first time. MJH to Bascom, July 7, 1944, Box 27, MJH-NU.
  90. McCaughey, *International Studies*, 122–40.
  91. Berman, *Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations*, 100–101.
  92. McCaughey, *International Studies*, xi, 134–35, 167–71.
  93. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 158–61.
  94. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 173–75, 178.
  95. Gardner to MJH, December 4, 1946, Box 37, MJH-NU.
  96. “JG’s [John Gardner] Visit to N.U.” Record of interview form, December 12, 1946, Box 278, CCG Files. Gardner noted that Herskovits was also involved in the Latin American studies undergraduate major.
  97. McKay to MJH, September 23, 1947, Charles Wagley, SSRC Committee on World Area Research, to MJH, September 29, 1947, MJH to Wagley, October 3, 1947, Ralph L. Beals, UCLA, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, to MJH, November 19, 1947, Box 41, MJH-NU. Herskovits chaired the session entitled “Interdisciplinary Research in World Areas.” Donald McKay, Harvard University Soviet expert, was general chair of the conference.
  98. Charles Dollard and MJH, interview, January 10, 1947, Box 169, CCG Files; Jackson Davis and MJH, interview, January 10, 1947, Series 1.4, Box 640, Folder 6702, GEB Papers.
  99. MJH to A. Irving Hollowell, NRC, January 8, 1947, Box 169, CCG Files. At the time, Hollowell, a specialist in Native American cultures, was teaching at Northwestern, where he taught from 1944 to 1947. He spent most of his career at the University of Pennsylvania, from 1927 to 1944 and from 1947 to 1963.
  100. Herskovits mentioned a number of North American universities and the Chicago Museum of Natural History as prominent in African studies. Although mentioning Fisk, he omitted Howard. MJH to Daryll C. Forde, Director, International African Institute, May 28, 1947, Box 38, MJH-NU.
  101. Vansina, *Living with Africa*, 45.

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102. MJH to Daryll C. Forde, Director, International African Institute, May 28, 1947, Box 38, MJH-NU; McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise*, 131–32. Herskovits's attendance at the IAI conference was funded by a Rockefeller Foundation grant. MJH and WHS [Whitney H. Shepardson], Carnegie Corp., June 4, 1948, interview, Box 167, CCG Files.
103. Herskovits, "Report of the Committee on African Anthropology," February 24, 1948, Box 39, MJH-NU.
104. Daryll Forde to MJH, July 8, 1947, Box 38, MJH-NU.
105. MJH to John Gardner, Carnegie Corp., July 14, 1947, Box 278, CCG Files.
106. John Gardner to MJH, July 16, 1947, Box 278, CCG Files.
107. MJH, John Gardner, Waldo Leland, interview, October 1, 1948, Box 278, CCG Files.
108. MJH to David Stevens, November 25, 1942, Box 20, MJH-NU.
109. "Memorandum on a Joint Committee on Negro and African Studies."
110. Young to MJH, May 11, 1944, MJH to Young, May 31, 1944, Box 30, MJH-NU; Leland to Herskovits, June 19, 1944, Box 27, MJH-NU.
111. Herskovits, "Contribution of Afroamerican Studies," 1.
112. Herskovits, "Contribution of Afroamerican Studies," 10.
113. Herskovits, "Contribution of Afroamerican Studies," 2–3.
114. MJH to Franklyn Snyder, Pres. NU, October 27, 1947, Snyder to MJH, November 25, 1947, Box 40, MJH-NU; John Gardner and MJH, interview at SSRC Area Studies Conference, November 28, 1947, Box 278, CCG Files. Despite Snyder's approval, Herskovits did face some opposition in the administration. Simeon Leland, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, supported an African program but opposed a "large-scale interdepartmental program." MJH, Gardner, Leland, interview, October 1, 1948, Box 278, CCG Files.
115. MJH to Franklyn Snyder, Pres. NU, October 27, 1947, Box 40, MJH-NU.
116. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 318–19.
117. Gardner to MJH, December 22, 1947, Box 278, CCG Files.
118. MJH to William McPeak, Ford Foundation, May 17, 1950, Wild to McPeak, May 15, 1950, MJH to Richard T. Sheldon, Behavioral Sciences Division, the Ford Foundation, May 29, 1956, Box 47, MJH-NU.
119. MJH to John W. Gardner, Carnegie Corp, January 8, 1948, Box 278, CCG Files.
120. MJH to Gardner, October 28, 1948, Carnegie Corp. Grant Form — "Office of Secretary to Treasurer," November 2, 1948, Box 278, CCG Files.
121. "Carnegie Grant Made for African Research," *Northwestern University Alumni News*, January 15, 1949, Box 46, MJH-NU.
122. MJH to Simeon E. Leland, March 7, 1949, Box 45, MJH-NU.
123. Carter, "African Studies in the United States: 1955–1975," 2.
124. Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 15.
125. Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, 15. The characterization of Northwestern as

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- the best African studies center was made by Nigerian scholar Kenneth O. Dike in 1963.
126. MJH to Charles Dollard, January 12, 1949, Box 43, MJH-NU.
  127. MJH to Simeon E. Leland, March 7, 1949, Box 45, MJH-NU.
  128. MJH to John W. Gardner, Carnegie Corp. of NY, May 17, 1949, Box 45, MJH-NU.
  129. Robert M. Lester, Carnegie Corp. to Dr. J. Roscoe Miller, president, Northwestern U., November 16, 1950, Box 278, CCG Files; “Northwestern Gets \$100,000 Grant from Carnegie Corp. for African Study Center,” Northwestern University News Service press release, December 4, 1951, Melville J. Herskovits File, College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Reprints, Biographical Files, NU Archives.
  130. Payson Wild to John Gardner, vp, Carnegie, August 13, 1951, Box 278, CCG Files.
  131. MJH to Pendleton Herring, SSRC, December 6, 1950, Box 54, MJH-NU.
  132. Robert M. Lester, Secretary, Carnegie Corp. to President James R. Miller, Northwestern, November 23, 1951, Box 278, CCG Files.
  133. “Northwestern Gets \$100,000 Grant from Carnegie Corp.”
  134. Charles Dollard and Payson Wild, interview, early 1951 or late 1950, Box 278, CCG Files; John Gardner, Payson Wild, Simon Leland, interview, September 4, 1951, Box 278, CCG Files.
  135. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 171; Charles Dollard, record of interview with Myrdal, March 7, 1939, NSGC, Reel 91; Frederick Keppel, memo, July 15, 1937, NSGC Reel 90.
  136. John Gardner, Payson Wild, Simeon Leland, interview, September 4, 1951, Box 278, CCG Files.
  137. John Gardner, Payson Wild, Simeon Leland, interview, September 4, 1951.
  138. WM, Carnegie Corp., and MJH, interview, April 21, 1954, Box 278, CCG Files.
  139. “Memorandum of Action of Committee of Program of African Studies Meeting, December 17, 1952,” Box 60, MJH-NU.
  140. “Social Science Research Council, Survey of Area Centers, May 15, 1951,” Box 54, MJH-NU.
  141. “Education in Review: Colleges Found Lacking in Courses to Teach Understanding of the World’s Major Areas,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1951, Box 58, MJH-NU.
  142. Lasky, *Never Complain*, 195–96; Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 178.
  143. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 178–79.
  144. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 178–79.
  145. Sutton and Smock, “Ford Foundation and African Studies,” 68.
  146. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 30.
  147. Mahoney, *JFK*, 34–36; Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 30.
  148. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 30.

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149. Mahoney, *JFK*, 34–36; Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 30.
150. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 49.
151. Lagemann, *Politics of Knowledge*, 178–79; MJH to H. Rowan Gaither Jr., April 24, 1950, Box 47, MJH-NU.
152. MJH to William McPeak, Ford Foundation, May 17, 1950, Wild to McPeak, May 15, 1950, Box 47, MJH-NU.
153. Sutton and Smock, “Ford Foundation and African Studies,” 68–70, 72. At the time of this article, both Sutton and Smock were senior Ford Foundation officials.
154. Sutton and Smock, “Ford Foundation and African Studies,” 68; Dressel, “Development of African Studies,” 67.
155. Ford Foundation press release, “Ford Foundation Announces Fellowships for African Study,” May 9, 1955, Box 67, MJH-NU. In 1954 the Ford Foundation also gave the “International African Institute \$50,000 for fellowships, library support, *African Abstracts*, and other purposes.” Sutton and Smock, “Ford Foundation and African Studies,” 68.
156. MJH to Members of the Ford Foundation Conference on Africa, ca. August 1, 1952, Box 55, MJH-NU.
157. MJH to Carl Spaeth, Ford Foundation, September 16, 1952, MJH to Members of the Ford Foundation Conference on Africa, ca. August 1, 1952, “Ford Foundation Conference on Africa, Evanston IL, August 18–23, 1952, Findings and Recommendations,” enclosed, MJH to Carl Spaeth, Ford Foundation, August 30, 1952, Box 55, MJH-NU.
158. Barnett to Carl Spaeth, Ford Foundation, September 10, 1952, Box 59, MJH-NU. In November 1950 Horace Mann Bond, president of Lincoln University, had announced the formation of “America’s first Institute for the Study of African Affairs.” “Institute for the Study of African Affairs is Established as Unit of Lincoln University,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1950, enclosed, Jack Harris to MJH, November 18, 1950, Box 53, MJH-NU. Vernon McKay of the Department of State told Herskovits that Lincoln’s planned program would be underfinanced, that it would be geared toward undergraduates, and that the “faculty has very little special competence on Africa.” Vernon McKay to MJH, November 22, 1950, Box 53, Folder 3, MJH-NU.
159. MJH to Carl Spaeth, Ford Foundation, September 16, 1952, Box 55, MJH-NU.
160. Jack S. Harris to MJH, August 27, 1952, Box 55, MJH-NU.
161. “Ford Foundation Conference on Africa.”
162. Logan to MJH, August 27, 1952, Logan Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; MJH to Carl Spaeth, Ford Foundation, August 30, 1952, Box 55, MJH-NU.
163. “Ford Foundation Conference on Africa”; Drake, “Herskovits and African Diaspora Studies.”
164. Sutton and Smock, “Ford Foundation and African Studies,” 70.



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165. MJH to Cleon Swayzee, Director of Research, Ford Foundation, May 20, 1954, Box 62, MJH-NU; Payson Wild, Northwestern University, to Cleon O. Swayzee, June 3, 1954, Reel Number 0292, Grant Number 55–18, Ford Foundation Archives, New York.
166. Dressel, “Development of African Studies,” 67; Sutton and Smock, “Ford Foundation and African Studies,” 70; “\$235,000 Grant for African Study Program,” *N.U. Alumni News*, January 1955, “N.U. Gets Grant For Africa Study,” *Chicago Daily News*, January 13, 1955, Box 69, MJH-NU.
167. Logan, *Howard University*, 436.
168. Berman, *Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations*, 102.
169. Berman, *Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations*, 101.
170. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 29. The Ford Foundation gave a total of \$270 million to thirty-four universities from 1953 to 1966 to fund area and language studies. Cumings, “Boundary Displacement,” 163.
171. Ford Foundation press release, “Ford Foundation Announces Fellowships for African Study.” The three were Warren d’Azevedo, anthropology; David K. Marvin, political science; and Arthur Tuden, anthropology. D’Azevedo planned a study of the Gola people in western Liberia, and Tuden would study the Ba-Ila people of Northern Rhodesia. Both planned eighteen-month studies.
172. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 29. Although Ford gave the lion’s share of the funding, Northwestern’s Program of African Studies enjoyed additional support from the Carnegie Corporation (with a five-year grant through 1956), Fulbright Fellowships, the SSRC, the Belgian-American Educational Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation. “The Northwestern University Program of African Studies,” n.d., 1957?, MJH-SC.
173. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 29.
174. “Minutes of the Conference of African Area Study Programs . . . March 11 and 12, 1955,” Box 68, MJH-NU.
175. “Minutes of the Conference of African Area Study Programs . . . March 11 and 12, 1955.”
176. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 31.
177. “Melville Herskovits Heads Association of African Studies,” *Evanston Review*, April 25, 1957, Melville J. Herskovits File, College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Reprints, Biographical Files, NU Archives; John A. Noon, U.S. Information Agency, News Release, “Northwestern University Anthropologist Heads New African Association,” n.d., Reel Number 0349, Grant Number 58–0396, Grant Files, Ford Foundation Archives; Pels, “Rockefeller Philanthropy,” 15; “Genesis of the Association.”
178. “Request for Grant Action,” March 11, 1958, Central Files C-300, Reel Num-

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- ber 0292, Grant Number 58–0396, Grant Files, Ford Foundation Archives; Drake to MJH, October 23, 1958, MJH-NU.
179. Bernice Stevens Decker, “American Colleges Widen African Study,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 1958?, Box 85, MJH-NU.
180. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 31.
181. Skinner, “African Studies,” 59.
182. Skinner, “African Studies,” 59.
183. Herskovits, “Some Thoughts,” 5–6.
184. Skinner, “African Studies,” 59. Herskovits did not, however, covertly seek alliances with the CIA as William G. Martin and Michael O. West have recently charged. Herskovits did write Allen Dulles, CIA director, in 1958 after he had heard that Dulles had testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in support of “training of more students in the United States in ‘exotic’ languages.” Herskovits and the Board of Directors of the ASA saw Dulles’s statement as an opportunity to increase government funding for “research and teaching as concerns Africa.” Martin and West, in quoting from this letter, omitted a key section. The sentence, in full, reads, “The Association, through its Committee on Research, would be happy to aid you in any way it can, particularly by advising as to any program that might be set up in accordance with the ideas you expressed,” that is, referring to language training. MJH to Allen W. Dulles, CIA, February 20, 1958, Box 76, Folder 5, MJH-NU; Martin and West, “Ascent, Triumph, and Disintegration,” 91–92.
185. “Herskovits and Wife Home from 8-Month Tour of Africa,” *Evanston Review*, October 24, 1957, Melville J. Herskovits File, College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Reprints, Biographical Files, NU Archives; “Northwestern University Program of African Studies.”
186. “Northwestern University Program of African Studies.”
187. “Memorandum On Characteristics of PAS,” June 2, 1960, Box 88, MJH-NU.
188. Campbell, interview; Herskovits, “Program of African Studies: The First Five Years, 1949–1953,” February 1954, Box 64, MJH-NU; MJH to Cleon Swayze, April 23, 1959, Reel Number 0292, Grant Number 55–18, Grant Files, Ford Foundation Archives.
189. MJH to Cleon Swayze, July 15, 1958, “Northwestern University, Program of African Studies, Report of Activities, July 1956–July 1958,” Box 77, MJH-NU.
190. “Sub-Committee’s Report to those invited to the Initial Consultation on March 13, 1946, In the office of the British Consul-General, New York, On the Question of African Students,” Series 1.2, Box 288, Folder 3003, GEB Papers.
191. Denzer, “In Memoriam.”
192. MJH to Kimball Young, Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, December 19, 1952, Moody E. Prior, Dean, Northwestern University, to Eduardo Mondlane, April 1, 1953, Box 60, MJH-NU.

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193. Decker, "American Colleges Widen African Study."
194. The quote is from Drake, "Reflections," 100.
195. Cole, *Conversations*, 18–22.
196. Drake, "Reflections," 91, 93.
197. Drake, "Reflections," 91, 93; Edgar G. Epps and Glenn R. Howze, "Survey of Black Social Scientists (Final Report)," 1971, Box 51, Series 5, Russell Sage Foundation Papers, Rockefeller Archive Center.
198. Walter Zenner to the author, E-mail communication, June 7, 2001, copy in the author's possession.
199. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 104–6; Simon Ottenberg to the author, E-mail communication, May 14, 2001, copy in the author's possession; Erika Bourguignon to the author, E-mail communication, May 17, 2001, copy in the author's possession. Ottenberg and Bourguignon were both students of Herskovits's during the 1950s.
200. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 104–6.
201. Smith, "Proposed African Studies At Fisk"; Davis to Smith, March 25, 1943, Series 1.3, Box 421, Folder 4412, GEB Papers.
202. Bourguignon to the author, e-mail communication.
203. Ottenberg to the author, e-mail communication.
204. "First Africanist Chair in U.S. Set Up at N.U." *Evanston Review*, March 23, 1961, Melville J. Herskovits File, College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Reprints, Biographical Files, NU Archives. The chair was funded by a \$500,000 endowment from Ford and the balance from Northwestern. In March 1961 Frazier congratulated Herskovits upon receiving his endowed chair, "No one in this country deserves this honor more than you." Frazier to MJH, March 21, 1961, Box 93, MJH-NU.
205. "Suggestions for Proposals to Ford Foundation, 1961–1971," February 10, 1960, Box 88, MJH-NU; Wild to Melvin Fox, Ford Foundation, May 17, 1960, Box 88, MJH-NU. By 1970 more than a hundred Ph.D.s had been awarded to Northwestern students who had done "detailed substantive work in African Studies." "Reports to the Ford Foundation 1969–1970 for the Program of African Studies and the National Unity Grant," n.d., Box 278, CCG Files.
206. Lystad, "African Studies," 48.

## 7. Foreign Policy Critic

1. Marte, *Political Cycles*, 74–81.
2. Herskovits, interview; Stocking, "Ideas and Institutions," 35. The wartime collapse and the postwar weakness of many of the colonial powers gave hope to subjugated peoples in Asia and Africa that independence was conceivable. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 215–17.
3. MJH to Leslie Spier, June 28, 1944, Box 30, MJH-NU.

4. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 652.
5. “Help Put Your Discoveries to Work, Scientists Urged,” *Chicago Daily News*, June 4, 1948, Box 41, MJH-NU.
6. MJH to Prof. Paul Honigsheim, Mich. State Univ., December 16, 1942, MJH-NU.
7. MJH to Dr. Kenneth Colegrove, Evanston IL, December 1, 1943, enclosure, Herskovits, Northwestern University Group, Universities Committee on Post-War International Problems, entitled “Problem IX, Colonies and Dependent Areas,” Box 27, MJH-NU; Herskovits, “Native Self-Government,” 413–23; MJH to Stettinius, September 12, 1944, Record Group 59, Box 1461, National Archives, Washington DC.
8. Herskovits, “Native Self-Government,” 421.
9. Herskovits, “Problem IX.”
10. Herskovits, “Problem IX.”
11. Herskovits, “Native Self-Government,” 421.
12. Herskovits, “Problem IX.”
13. Herskovits, “Native Self-Government,” 421–23.
14. Herskovits, “Problem IX”; Herskovits, “Native Self-Government,” 422–23.
15. Herskovits, “Native Self-Government,” 421–23; Herskovits, “Problem IX.”
16. “The Future of the Colonial System,” *Northwestern University on the Air: The Reviewing Stand* 3 (June 4, 1944), MJH-SC.
17. Huxley, “Colonies and Freedom,” 106–9; Herskovits, “Communication,” 280–81.
18. Mbono Ojike to MJH, May 18, 1944, Box 30, MJH-NU; Herskovits, “Communication,” 280.
19. Herskovits, “Democracy – For Whom?”
20. Gendzier, “Play It Again Sam,” 73.
21. Gendzier, “Play It Again Sam,” 74.
22. Herskovits, interview.
23. Simpson, introduction to *Universities and Empire*, xvi–xvii.
24. Simpson, introduction to *Universities and Empire*, xxi. In 1952 Herskovits described this transformation more innocuously. He noted that during the postwar era, social scientists were more and more pressed “into the current of everyday affairs, causing more and more investigators to depart from their earlier aim of fulfilling what has been termed the curiosity of function of scholarship, and devote themselves to the analysis of specific problems raised by practical needs.” Herskovits, *Franz Boas*, 102–3.
25. Needell, “Project Troy.”
26. Rauch, “Area Institute Programs,” 418.
27. McGhee quoted in Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 72–73.
28. MJH to Robert M. Lester, Carnegie Corporation, April 24, 1950, Box 47, MJH-NU.

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29. MJH to Kimball Young, December 19, 1952, Box 60, MJH-NU.
30. MJH to Cleon Swayze, April 23, 1959, Reel Number 0292, Grant Number 55–18, Grant Files, Ford Foundation Archives.
31. Carter, “African Studies,” 2–3; Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 320–21.
32. Dressel, “Development of African Studies,” 68. After Herskovits’s death in 1963, Northwestern began African language study in 1964 and received Title VI funding in 1965 when the school was added to the list of Language and Area Centers of the U.S. Office of Education. Carter, “African Studies,” 2–3.
33. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 58.
34. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 58.
35. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 60–61.
36. “Minutes: Meeting of Organizing Committee, International Conference on Africa, March 27, 1943”; “Statement Concerning Agenda for a Conference on Africa, April 19, 1943.”
37. McKinley, *Lure of Africa*, 187–88.
38. “Statement Concerning Agenda for a Conference on Africa, April 19, 1943.”
39. MJH to Willard L. Thorp, April 18, 1950, Box 50, MJH-NU.
40. “Social Science Research Council, Second Conference on Social Science Problems of Point Four, February 2–3, 1951,” Box 54, MJH-NU.
41. Walker, *Richard Wright*, 274; Vaillant, *Black, French, and African*, 234. The founders of the journal included Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Alioune Diop, and Richard Wright, with support from Jean-Paul Sartre, André Gide, and Albert Camus.
42. Walker, *Richard Wright*, 274, 278–79. American participants at the conference included Horace Mann Bond, William Fontaine, John A. Davis, Mercer Cook, and James Baldwin. Du Bois and George Padmore sent messages to the conference. Frantz Fanon and Cheik Diop also attended. Walker, *Richard Wright*, 276–80.
43. MJH to Frances Herskovits, August 3, 1962, Box 70, SCmjh-sc.
44. Walker, *Richard Wright*, 282.
45. Franklin, *Living Our Stories*, 219.
46. Diggins, *Proud Decades*, 253.
47. Renteln, “Relativism,” 57.
48. Benedict quoted in Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 210; Renteln, “Relativism,” 57.
49. Stocking, “Ideas and Institutions,” 34–35.
50. Herskovits, “On Cultural Values.”
51. MJH to Eleanor Roosevelt, June 26, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU; “Statement on Human Rights, Submitted to the Commission on Human Rights, United Nations, By the Executive Board, American Anthropological Association,” Box 37, MJH-NU; Morsink, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, ix–x.
52. “Statement on Human Rights.”
53. “Statement on Human Rights.” Herskovits was advised in September 1947

that the AAA statement “has been duly noted for consideration in accordance with the procedure laid down by the United Nations.” John P. Humphrey, Director, Division of Human Rights, United Nations, to MJH, September 25, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU.

54. “Statement on Human Rights,” 539–43.
55. “Statement on Human Rights,” 539–43.
56. Renteln, “Relativism,” 67.
57. Steward, “Brief Communications.”
58. Barnett, “Brief Communications.”
59. Bennett, “Science and Human Rights.”
60. Ralph L. Beals to MJH, July 3, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU.
61. MJH to Beals, July 15, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU.
62. Lauren, *Evolution of International Human Rights*, 299–303; Glendon, *World Made New*, 222.
63. MJH to Stuart Chase, January 27, 1947, Charles Dollard to MJH, January 6, 1947, Box 37, MJH-NU.
64. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, 77.
65. Mahoney, *JFK*, 34–36.
66. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 26, 28. U.S. government assistance to Africa rose from averaging less than \$25 million per year from 1952 to 1957 to an average of \$150 million per year in the succeeding three years.
67. William Fulbright to Paul H. Douglas, March 30, 1956, MJH to Paul H. Douglas, April 16, 1956, Box 70, MJH-NU.
68. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 28.
69. U.S. Congress, *Review of Foreign Policy, 1958*, 586.
70. U.S. Congress, *Review of Foreign Policy, 1958*, 596.
71. U.S. Congress, *Review of Foreign Policy, 1958*, 587.
72. U.S. Congress, *Review of Foreign Policy, 1958*, 588–91.
73. U.S. Congress, *Review of Foreign Policy, 1958*, 597–98; Oliver and Atmore, *Africa since 1800, 199–201*, 230.
74. “Herskovits on the U.S. and Africa.”
75. MJH to Logan, June 5, 1959, MJH to David Rockefeller, June 5, 1959, MJH to Barnett, June 8, 1959, MJH to Frazier, June 8, 1959, MJH to Smythe, June 10, 1959, Frazier to MJH, June 11, 1959, Smythe to MJH, June 13, 1959, Logan to MJH, June 29, 1959, Box 102, MJH-NU.
76. MJH to Fulbright, August 28, 1959; Herskovits, “Study of United States Foreign Policy, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Study XIII, United States Foreign Policy in Africa,” Box 101, Bound Vol. 2, MJH-NU. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee published the report on October 23, 1959. “Herskovits on the U.S. and Africa.” Herskovits also sent the report to a number of prominent individuals, including Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, president, University of Notre Dame, and David Rocke-

- feller of Chase Manhattan Bank. Hesburgh agreed with Herskovits's recommendations, while Rockefeller expressed no opinion. Hesburgh to MJH, November 24, 1959, MJH to Hesburgh, December 1, 1959, Rockefeller to MJH, November 24, 1959, Box 102, MJH-NU.
77. MJH to Horace Kallen, October 21, 1959, Box 88, MJH-NU.
  78. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 1–3.
  79. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 1–3.
  80. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 11–12, 23–31.
  81. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 6–7.
  82. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 8.
  83. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 6–7.
  84. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 80.
  85. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 11–12. In April 1959, as the "final guest lecturer of the Danforth Foundation Project," Herskovits noted that the South African situation was "ten times greater than our problem in the South." He also argued that American race relations lead Africans to view the United States as hypocritical when Americans profess ideals but do not live up to them. Betty Maynor, "Racial Situation Discussed by Recent Lecturer," no publication indicated, ca. May 1, 1959, Box 85, MJH-NU.
  86. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 23–31.
  87. "Racism Worldwide—Herkovitz [*sic*]," *Evanston Newsletter*, January 23, 1947, Box 41, MJH-NU. In 1959 Herskovits also made efforts to aid South African professors who were fired or censored due to the emergence of government control of the universities in South Africa. He asked the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Ford Foundation to intercede. The AAUP did contribute money "to the fund that has been set up by the Senate of the University of Natal to create a special Fellowship Fund so that the scholars who have been dismissed can remain in the Union and go on with their research." Melvin Fox, Ford Foundation, wrote Herskovits in December 1959 that Natal University was going to hire persecuted professors. MJH to Carr, November 11, 1959, Box 87, MJH-NU; MJH to Francis X. Sutton, Overseas Development Program, Ford Foundation, December 15, 1959, Fox to MJH, December 21, 1959, Box 88, MJH-NU.
  88. "Herskovits and Wife Home from 8-Month Tour of Africa"; "President of Liberia Slates NU Visit," *Daily Northwestern*, October 21, 1954, Box 69, MJH-NU; *Daily Northwestern*, October 26, 1954, Box 69, MJH-NU; Herskovits Diary, August 8, 1957, entry, African Field Trip, 1957, Box 30, MJH-SC. Herskovits's travels in Africa and his excellent contacts and reputation among African leaders led many to visit him in Northwestern. These visits provided excellent publicity for the African Studies Program. In October 1954 Liberian president William V. S. Tubman visited Northwestern and met with Herskovits.

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89. Herskovits Diary, August 9, 1957, entry, African Field Trip, 1957, Box 30, MJH-SC.
90. Herskovits Diary, African Field Trip, 1957.
91. Herskovits Diary, African Field Trip, 1957.
92. Herskovits Diary, African Field Trip, 1957.
93. Herskovits Diary, African Field Trip, 1957.
94. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 19–20.
95. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 245–46.
96. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 19–21.
97. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 23–31.
98. Herskovits, "Study of United States Foreign Policy," 23–31.
99. "Open Door in Africa," *New York Times*, November 6, 1959, Box 102, MJH-NU.
100. "NU Prof. Influences Foreign Policy," *Daily Northwestern*, November 12, 1959, Box 102, MJH-NU.
101. Edgar A. Mowrer, "Neutralists Shake West," *Oklahoma City Times*, November 12, 1959, Box 102, MJH-NU.
102. U.S. Congress, *United States Foreign Policy*.
103. MJH to Alan Merriam, April 7, 1960, Box 89, MJH-NU. George M. Houser, executive director of the American Committee on Africa, also testified and generally supported Herskovits's statement. Testimony of George M. Houser, Executive Director of the American Committee on Africa, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "March 16, 1960, Box 102, MJH-NU.
104. U.S. Congress, *United States Foreign Policy*, 108.
105. U.S. Congress, *United States Foreign Policy*, 109–10.
106. U.S. Congress, *United States Foreign Policy*, 111–12.
107. U.S. Congress, *United States Foreign Policy*, 112.
108. "Statement by Melville J. Herskovits, Director, Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Wednesday, March 16, 1960," Box 102, MJH-NU.
109. MJH to Alan Merriam, April 7, 1960, Box 89, MJH-NU; U.S. Congress, *United States Foreign Policy*, 129–48.
110. "Storm over South Africa," *West Africa*, March 26, 1960, Box 102, MJH-NU.
111. Staniland, *American Intellectuals*, 132.
112. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 54–58; "50 Killed in South Africa as Police Fire on Rioters," *New York Times*, March 22, 1960; Dana Adams Schmidt, "Police Violence in South Africa Criticized by U.S." *New York Times*, March 23, 1960; Leonard Ingalls, "Criticism By U.S. Irks South Africa," *New York Times*, March 24, 1960; "Storm over South Africa"; all in Box 102, MJH-NU.
113. Mahoney, *JFK*, 36–37.
114. Mahoney, *JFK*, 37–38.



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115. In July 1955 Herskovits went to “Bukavu in the eastern Congo to attend a meeting of an inter-governmental Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara.” News Release, July 25, 1955, Northwestern University News Service, July 25, 1955, Box 9, College of Arts and Sciences, Faculty Reprints/Biographical Files, Herskovits, Melville J., Accession 79–19, NU Archives (hereafter cited as CAS, FR/BF, MJH, NU Archives).
116. MJH to Jacques J. Maquet, October 28, 1960, Box 93, Folder 12, MJH-NU.
117. “New African Leaders Favor Lumumba, Says Herskovits,” *Evanston Review*, October 27, 1960, Box 9, CAS, FR/BF, MJH, NU Archives.
118. Burner, *John F. Kennedy*, 83.
119. Mahoney, *JFK*, 246–47.
120. Mahoney, *JFK*, 246–47; Stanley Meisler, “Experts Agree U.N. Better Qualified Peacemaker,” *Houston Chronicle*, January 23, 1963, CAS, FR/BF, MJH, NU Archives.
121. Burner, *John F. Kennedy*, 82.
122. Robert C. Good, Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research, to MJH, December 6, 1960, Box 102, MJH-NU.
123. Good to MJH, December 10, 1960, Box 102, MJH-NU; “Task Force on Sub-Saharan Africa: Questions,” Box 102, MJH-NU; Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 25–26.
124. Mahoney, *JFK*, 241–42.
125. Press release, Department of Information Services, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, March 10, 1961, CAS, FR/BF, MJH, NU Archives.
126. MJH to Lady Hilda Selwyn-Clarke, London, England, March 13, 1961, Box 94, MJH-NU.
127. FBI form with no title, to Mr. Short, copy to Bureau of African Affairs, dated July 31, 1961, received after FOIA request; Memo to W. C. Sullivan from name deleted, October 19, 1961, received after FOIA request.
128. FBI report of SA, June 29, 1961, San Francisco Office, File No. 161–187, Special Inquiry, Subject: Melville Jean Herskovits, received after FOIA request; SAC, Chicago Office, FBI to Director, FBI, June 9, 1960, subject: Melville Jean Herskovits, received after FOIA request.
129. Memo, SAC, Chicago Office, FBI, to Director, FBI, subject: Melville Jean Herskovits, June 11, 1962; FBI memo, June 11, 1962, re: Melville Jean Herskovits, no author indicated, received after FOIA request.
130. “Advisory Council on African Affairs, June 1962, Box 98, Folder 20, MJH-NU. In 1948 Herskovits told a friend, “I’m likely to be branded a dangerous Communist any day by the House Un-Americans. . . . But as long as I am here I do not intend to kowtow to the reactionaries.” Davis, *Living the Blues*, 293.
131. “Herskovits in Africa to Help Celebrate Nigerian Freedom,” *Evanston Review*,

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- September 24, 1960; “Senegal President Praises Herskovits,” *Evanston Review*, December 1, 1960; “Herskovits to Address UN Meet,” *Daily Northwestern*, May 5, 1961; all in Box 9, CAS, FR/BF, MJH, NU Archives.
132. MJH to Leon-G. Damas, September 27, 1962, Box 96, MJH-NU.
133. FBI “Security Investigation Data for Sensitive Position,” for Melville J. Herskovits, June 28, 1961, received after FOIA request.
134. “New African Leaders Favor Lumumba.”
135. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 5–6. In 1960 Northwestern named Herskovits President’s Fellow. This gave him a leave of absence with full pay and the time to complete the writing of the book. MJH to Alan Merriam, May 19, 1960, Box 89, MJH-NU.
136. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 169.
137. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 247.
138. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 169.
139. For example, see Wallerstein, review of *Human Factor in Changing Africa*; Carter, review of *Human Factor in Changing Africa*, 3.
140. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 292.
141. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 247.
142. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 288–91.
143. In November 1962 J. B. Danquah, who was a prominent leader in the Ghanaian nationalist movement, criticized Herskovits’s failure to give credit to the indigenous independence movement in Ghana going back close to a hundred years. Instead, Herskovits credited the Pan-African movement, including mostly non-Africans, as being the initial organizational spur to the nationalist movements in Africa. In his reply, Herskovits defended his own interpretation, maintaining that the Pan-African movement had the “broadest influence.” This interpretation is somewhat surprising given Herskovits’s usual emphasis on Africans themselves and their own culture. Danquah to MJH, November 8, 1962, MJH to Danquah, November 27, 1962, Box 96, MJH-NU.
144. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 354–55.
145. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 455–56.
146. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 457.
147. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 477–78.
148. Anthropologist James W. Fernandez, a former student, noted that Herskovits had tackled a subject “too vast,” leading to a subpar performance that was not as incisive as his other books. Nonetheless, “No one . . . could have written a more authoritative survey of Africa as a human problem. James W. Fernandez, review of *The Human Factor in Changing Africa*, in *Journal of American Folklore* 77 (October–December 1964): 353–54, Box 71, MJH-SC.
149. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 379–400.
150. Herskovits, *Human Factor*, 381–82, 414–15.

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151. MJH to C. Kenneth Snyder, Deputy Director, African Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State, December 26, 1962, Box 98, MJH-NU; Porter, “First International Congress,” 200.
152. Mahoney, *JFK*, 227–28, 244–48; Marte, *Political Cycles*, 82–88.
153. Marte, *Political Cycles*, 58–59, 173–74, 267–69, 364–65, 367–69.

Epilogue

1. “Melville Herskovits [*sic*], 68 [*sic*]; Anthropologist on Africa,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1963.
2. Adams, *Education of Henry Adams*, 300.
3. Drake, “Herskovits and African Diaspora Studies,” 42.
4. Drake, “Herskovits and African Diaspora Studies,” 42.
5. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 275.
6. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 275. Meier and Rudwick reported that Levine was unfamiliar with Herskovits’s writings at the time of the formulation of his perspective. Following the publication of Levine’s *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1977), Meier pronounced that Herskovits’s thesis had been proven correct. Meier, “Triumph of Melville J. Herskovits.”
7. Scott, *Contempt and Pity*, 150–59; Moynihan, *Negro Family*.
8. Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal*, 265.
9. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 326.
10. Billingsley, *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder*, 83–84, 95.
11. Scott, *Contempt and Pity*, 172.
12. In a 1996 lecture at North Carolina Central University, Durham, Bobby Seale, cofounder of the Black Panther Party, mentioned that Herskovits’s ideas were influential in his reexamination of his ideas about black culture and history. In 1988 sociologist St. Clair Drake recalled that the Black Panthers had invoked Herskovits’s studies during the 1960s. Drake, “Herskovits and African Diaspora Studies,” 42.
13. Herskovits, interview.
14. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 170–91.
15. Scott, *Contempt and Pity*, 164.
16. Gates quoted in Ariel Swartley, “‘Wonders of the African World’: Television Focuses on Africa’s Human History,” *New York Times* October 24, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/artleisure/tv-africa.html>, accessed October 25, 1999.
17. Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, 82.
18. Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, 82.
19. Fishkin, “Interrogating ‘Whiteness.’” See also Philips, “The African Heritage of White America?”
20. Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, 9–11.

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21. Levine, *Black Culture*, 4–5.
22. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 287–88.
23. Edward B. Fiske, “For Black Studies, the Fight Goes On,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1983.
24. Fiske, “For Black Studies.”
25. “Black Studies Struggling.”
26. Peter Applebome, “Can Harvard’s Powerhouse Alter the Course of Black Studies,” *New York Times*, November 3, 1996.
27. Cummings, “African and Afro-American Studies Centers,” 294–95.
28. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 288.
29. Meier and Rudwick, *Black History*, 290–91; Gershenhorn, “Life and Writings of Earlie Endris Thorpe,” 93–94.
30. “A Debate on Activism in Black Studies,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1998
31. Manning Marable, “A Plea that Scholars Act Upon, Not Just Interpret, Events,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1998.
32. Henry Louis Gates Jr., “A Call to Protect Academic Integrity from Politics,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1998.
33. Moore, “Changing Perspectives,” 7.
34. Guyer, *African Studies*, 58.
35. Guyer, *African Studies*, 53; “Melville J. Herskovits—A Life Devoted to African Cultures.”
36. Stuckey, “Melville J. Herskovits,” 30.
37. Skinner, “African Studies,” 62. In 1968, at the annual ASA meeting in Los Angeles, a Black Caucus was formed, which demanded that the ASA institute policies to “render itself more relevant to deal with the conditions of black people in Africa and the African diaspora; increase the number of blacks in policy-making decisions in the organization; address itself to the youth of the country; seek out African and Afro-American scholars to direct the emerging African and Afro-American Studies Centers; and help change American public opinion about black people.”
38. Skinner, “African Studies,” 63–64; Guyer, *African Studies*, 59.
39. Cummings, “African and Afro-American Studies,” 303.
40. Guyer, *African Studies in the United States*, 59.
41. Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*, 148.
42. Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*, 147–48.
43. Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*, 165.
44. D’Souza, *End of Racism*, 24.
45. For an insightful critique of D’Souza and the conservative attack on cultural relativism, see Di Leonardo, “Patterns of Culture Wars.”
46. Annan, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”
47. “The Text of President Clinton’s State of the Union Address to Congress,” January 27, 2000, [www.nytimes.com/library/politics/012800sotu-text-2.html](http://www.nytimes.com/library/politics/012800sotu-text-2.html), accessed January 28, 2000.



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