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PRESCRIBING THE AMERICAN DREAM: PSYCHOANALYSTS, MASS MEDIA, AND
THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL NORMS IN THE 1950'S

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Prescribing the American Dream: Psychoanalysts, Mass Media, and the Construction of Social and Political Norms in the 1950s

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This paper surveys how and why psychoanalysis during the 1950s—its “Golden Age” in the United States—emerged as a highly respected professional discipline with great public currency. The prevalence and popularity of psychoanalysts in public culture is substantiated by an extensive survey of primary print sources featuring psychoanalysts opining on many of the major social and political issues of the decade. Combining these opinions with those expressed in professional journals and publications, this paper reveals how psychoanalysts used their growing public currency to shape debates about which social identities and behaviors, cultural values, and political ideals were appropriate and legitimate for Americans during the era. By determining the boundaries between normal and abnormal, and associating some identities, values, and behavior with mental illness, psychoanalysts helped construct and legitimize social and political norms in postwar society. The behaviors and ideals psychoanalysts publicly promoted included marriage, home-ownership, and a new nuclear family; separate gender spheres and clearly defined roles for men and women; heterosexuality; personal industriousness; anticommunism; and individualism. Finally, despite the preeminence of concerns about conformity among intellectuals during the 1950s, and the apparent promise of psychoanalysis to support better self-realization for individuals, the construction and normalization of this limited set of values actually promoted conformity and thwarted individuality.

An anonymous advice-seeker wrote to the *Washington Post's* "Mary Haworth's Mail"—an advice column—seeking counsel for her seemingly troubled marriage. "C.C.," as the letter was signed, began by describing her "two fine teen-age children" who depended solely on her to "see them safely into adulthood." She had no help for the rearing of her children. No grandparents or other relatives lived either in her household or at any reasonable distance, and she expected little help from their father. However, "grave sins" had C.C. contemplating leaving her husband. She had "legal proof" that her husband was "perverse, atheistic and strongly attracted to communism." Mary Haworth claimed that because of these facts C.C.'s husband was likely "both evil and crazy, in a devil-possessed sort of way." Considering the husband's "ambivalent sexuality, leaning toward overt homosexuality...[and his] Communist predilections," Haworth conceded C.C. "might have grounds" for an uncontested divorce. Even though both the letter writer and Haworth regarded the husband's behavior as evil, Haworth assumed his behavior derived from "distorted filial feelings...resentful maladjustment" and misplaced aggression. Though she liked to employ such concepts in her advice column, Haworth warned that help for "anti-God, anti democracy individuals" was perhaps "beyond [the] depth" of either herself or C.C. If the distraught C.C. wanted to save her husband and her marriage, "expert psychoanalysis would be necessary to reclaim him." While assuring her the choice of divorce was hers, Haworth promised that psychoanalysis held the power to cure her husband of his mental, emotional, and spiritual afflictions. With professional help, C.C. might "reclaim" him as a husband, a father, a Christian, and an American.¹

¹ Mary Haworth, "His Evil Reflects a Grudge," *Washington Post*, Mar. 11 1953, 28.

Threats of nuclear annihilation, communist subversion, loss of identity, and changes in the makeup and expectations for the American family aroused serious anxieties in Americans in the 1950s. A booming corporate postwar economy with increasing numbers of salaried, managerial workers also provided the resources, flexible schedules, and sometimes even the stresses propelling an increasing number of individuals toward professional help.² Psychoanalysis, a particularly expensive therapeutic regimen demanding an extensive commitment by patients, became an increasingly popular form of therapy for Americans.³ At the height of the discipline's popularity and prestige in the 1950s—an “Age of Affluence and Anxiety,” psychoanalysts helped patients deal with their fears and adjust to the new realities of the postwar world. Psychoanalysts also possessed, however, a great power to influence individual behaviors, shape or retune personalities, and reorient individuals' aspirations toward socially acceptable goals.⁴ In the therapy room and on the pages of newspapers and popular magazines, psychoanalysts helped construct and normalize a limited number of social values and political ideals in American public life. By establishing the boundaries between normal and

² Concerning fear and anxiety in postwar America, consider Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture At the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1985); William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1990); William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951).

³ My uses of “psychiatrist,” “psychologist,” and “psychoanalyst” in this paper are not meant to be interchangeable. Psychoanalysis is a distinct disciplinary wing of psychotherapy, more generally. Psychoanalysis, however, may be practiced by psychiatrists holding an M.D. When referring to the psychological disciplines, I am referring to all three. When discussing psychoanalysts, my focus in this paper, I will refer to them as such. For information on patient costs, commitment required, and the attraction to psychoanalysis in postwar America, see Nathan G. Hale, Jr., *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 247-289.

⁴ Carl N. Degler, *Affluence and Anxiety: America Since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Discussion of affluence and anxiety in the 1950s can also be found in Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), Ch. 4.

abnormal, psychoanalysts legitimized and advanced certain values, moralities, and identities while discrediting others.

The value system which media and psychoanalysts promoted was resonant because it could, in part, be described as the new American dream. The paragon of middle-class Americana in the 1950s—husband and wife raising children in a suburban home—situated all hopes and dreams in each individual American’s private utopia. The strength of nuclear family bonds was not diffused by multiple generations, community dependence, or the burden of work by all members in the family. A “new nuclear family ideal” emerged consisting of father, mother, and children living in a single-family home in the suburbs. This new “domestic ideology” provided a “buffer” against disturbing postwar political and social developments, yet the ideal was still new and unfamiliar.⁵ By advocating clearly defined, traditional gender roles and normative sexuality set in the single-family, middle-class home, psychoanalysts helped legitimize and popularize this new American dream. As positive outcomes to achieve or to appreciatively return to after therapy, psychoanalysts tied these identities, goals, and values with rational behavior and good mental health. Adult behavior that deviated from these norms was either immature or pathological. By stigmatizing alternative lifestyles as evidence of abnormality, perhaps even insanity, psychoanalysts offered the new American dream one of the most concrete foundations for legitimacy and normalcy. Even more than desirable, the new American dream was imperative.

⁵ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 8-26; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), Ch.’s 5& 6; James Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 136; Lawrence R. Samuel, “The American Dream: A Bibliographic Review,” *The Hedgehog Review* 15, no. 2 (2013), 57.

As psychoanalysts normalized the goals of Americans, they also catalogued and assigned the appropriate means for achieving them. Psychoanalysts advised patients that the traditional American value of hard work needed to be applied to therapy as well as to their personal pursuit of happiness. Industriousness promised self-satisfaction, good mental health, and the material comforts available to Americans in the unprecedented prosperity of the postwar period. Loafers not only missed out on the splendors of consumer capitalism and the other facets of the American dream but risked mental illness—if they did not suffer from it already. The imperative of a good work ethic to achieve the American dream, as advanced by psychoanalysts, represented perhaps the greatest of motivations, and the heaviest of pressures, to conform to standardized social behavior. Healthy, happy Americans in the 1950s worked hard, were married, and raised their children just like everybody else.

The promotion of key American ideals by psychoanalysts also devalued communist ideology—the antithesis of these values. Psychoanalysts, however, explicitly criticized communism and equated membership in the Communist Party (CP-USA) with mental illness and social maladjustment. Psychoanalysts portrayed American communists as individuals neurotically obsessed with a need for belonging and alleged the Party manipulated this psychological weakness and exploited its members rather than attracting them based on ideology. By delegitimizing communism, psychoanalysts allayed some of the fears of the Cold War and further bolstered American values and political ideals. Ironically, psychologically maneuvering individuals toward communism was not dissimilar to what psychoanalysts were doing to promote a different value-system—the new American Dream. Even while the means were

similar and psychoanalysts warned of the dangers of the Communist Party, one of the forewarned results (conformity) appeared to be a consequence of the efforts of both groups.

By denigrating communism and promoting its antithetical value system, the American dream, psychoanalysts supposedly stood as a defense against mass society. As professional therapists offering Americans guidance in their quests for self-satisfaction and personal fulfillment, psychoanalysts proselytized for the cult of individuality long embedded in American life. In fact, despite appearing to serve such a celebrated ideal in the postwar period, psychoanalysts contributed to realizing just the opposite. Normalizing and promoting social values and political ideals indeed demanded that individuals conform to the standards of American society rather than their own idiosyncratic, or truly individual, visions. Even in the strongest defenses of individuality, a few prominent psychoanalysts offered alarming solutions to the problem of growing conformity in American society. Promoting individual as well as large-scale social reeducation to head off the drift toward mass society, these solutions were markedly conformist and uncomfortably totalitarian in both their means and ends. In proposing methods to avoid mass society, some psychoanalysts risked realizing the nightmare they hoped to avoid.

Psychoanalysts were not lone, visionary architects of a wholly new value system, nor was their influence limited to the therapy room. Mass media's fascination with psychoanalysis during the 1950s ensured that its practitioners became public figures who were able to disseminate their opinions widely. Their exposure was so great that psychoanalytic insights were offered as expert scientific commentary on the most mundane aspects of daily life as well as the most consequential events of the nation. Capturing the public's imagination and enjoying its admiration with the help of popular national news outlets, this largely unscientific discipline

(sometimes called an art by its practitioners) capitalized on the power and prestige of American society's new great faith—scientific rationalism—to steer public debates, construct new social realities, and advance the public status of both psychoanalysts and the new value system.⁶

Beneath the seemingly impartial, scientific expertise of a medical profession, however, lay the value-laden assumptions of theorists whose discipline relied on subjective interpretation. While appearing objective, the very nature of psychoanalytical inquiry itself was subjective, irreproducible, and “shaped by national contexts.” Clinical psychoanalysts helped individuals explore their experiences to understand the unique causes for their unique personalities. In commenting on wider social and political phenomenon, psychoanalysts also abandoned clinical procedures dependent on personal, “mutual and interactive” sessions.⁷ Neither approach was reproducible or data driven. Called “a collection of unproven (and probably impossible to prove) hypotheses” by current commentators, scholarship today accepts it as neither a natural nor a social science.⁸

The very “plasticity of psychoanalysis” was also evidenced “by the existence of different versions of it, many of them incompatible with each other.”⁹ Distinct from the middle and upper-class air of psychoanalysis in the United States during the postwar period, socially

⁶ For the value-laden nature of psychoanalysis and questions about its scientific basis, see Lavinia Gomez, *The Freud Wars: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2005), vii; Riccardo Steiner, “Hermeneutics or Hermes-mess?,” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 76, (1995), 76; Ernest Gellner, “Psychoanalysis, Social Role and Testability,” in *Psychotherapy and Its Discontents*, ed. W. Dryden and C. Feltham (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), 41; Famed psychoanalyst, Robert Lindner, argued as early as 1952 that psychoanalysis was an “art” more than a proper science. Robert Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion* (New York: Rhinehart & Co., 1952), 138-143.

⁷Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion*, 141-143.

⁸ Joy Damousi & Mariano Ben Plotkin, “Introduction,” *The Transnational Unconscious: Essays in the History of Psychoanalysis and Transnationalism*, edited by Joy Damousi & Mariano Ben Plotkin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-12.

conscious activists in “Red Vienna” in the 1930s offered low-cost or free psychoanalytic clinics as a national welfare initiative.¹⁰ The Communist Party in the USSR banned psychotherapy as bourgeois in the 1920s, only to later use it to dismiss dissidents and other discontents as insane. In 1949, the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Association dissolved itself until its members could revise the discipline’s seemingly unsavory preoccupation with the individual.¹¹ And on the other side of the ideological divide, Dutch psychoanalysts defended European imperialism and dismissed Indonesian nationalists who demanded independence as pathological. Psychoanalysis could be very much used as a “discourse of justification” for a variety of different, sometimes contradictory positions.¹²

Even when psychoanalytic insights offered obvious contradictions and would have been apparent to the most casual of newspaper readers in the United States, the public status of analysts and their authority as scientific experts during this era remained unchallenged. This was in part because of the power of a medical degree in the public’s imagination—which psychoanalytic organizations in the United States near universally required.¹³ The opinions of lay analysts, those possessing no medical degree but having undergone psychoanalytic training

¹⁰ Elizabeth Ann Danto, “Three Roads from Vienna: Psychoanalysis, Modernism and Social Welfare,” *The Transnational Unconscious: Essays in the History of Psychoanalysis and Transnationalism*, edited by Joy Damousi & Mariano Ben Plotkin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 22-23. There is a singular example of low-cost psychoanalysis in the United States during this era. Frederic Wertham and Richard Wright opened the Lafargue Clinic in Harlem for the unusually affordable rate of \$.25/hr. Psychiatrists volunteered and were not paid. Eli Zaretsky, “Beyond the Blues: Richard Wright, Psychoanalysis, and the Modern Idea of Culture,” *The Transnational Unconscious: Essays in the History of Psychoanalysis and Transnationalism*, edited by Joy Damousi & Mariano Ben Plotkin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 43-70.

¹¹ Ferenc Eros, “Psychoanalysis Behind Iron Curtains,” in Lene Auestad, *Psychoanalysis and Politics: Exclusion and the Politics of Representation*, London: Karnac Books, 2012, 205-208.

¹² Frances Gouda, “Primitivity, Animism, and Psychoanalysis: European Visions of the Native ‘Soul’ in the Dutch East Indies, 1900-1949,” *The Transnational Unconscious: Essays in the History of Psychoanalysis and Transnationalism*, edited by Joy Damousi & Mariano Ben Plotkin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 92.

¹³ Damousi & Plotkin, “Introduction,” 4; Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, Ch. 2 & 211-216.

and education under another psychoanalyst, were publicized as well however. The power of a medical degree alone did not help psychoanalysts achieve growing public and professional prestige in the United States. It was the content of their commentary during this particular moment and the values, goals, and identities they promoted among Americans that more than anything helped bolster their public status. In turn, their growing professional prestige further compounded acceptance of this particular value-system. Resembling a chamber of echoes where the voices of psychoanalysts and the ideas they vocalized grew louder and more resonant with every exclamation, this public discourse reinforced the power of both. This dialogic relationship, in many ways, reproduced on a national scale the mutuality and interactivity of the psychoanalytic session.

The historiography of psychoanalysis in the United States is limited. Only a handful of studies exist, and they vary in depth, focus, and quality. Even fewer are examinations of psychoanalysts' interventions, both direct and indirect, in the politics of the United States. This paper explores not so much the politics within psychoanalysis but the politics of psychoanalysis and its relation to broader social and political trends in postwar America. The analysis relies upon an interpretive understanding of politics that includes social issues that may not have been directly voted on in Congress but nonetheless were filled with public, political, and national meaning.

Previous histories of psychoanalysis in the United States have focused on intra-disciplinary politics, the process of medicalization and exclusion of lay analysts, and the theoretical evolution of the discipline. There have also been handful of studies exploring the evidence of and reasons for its popularity in the postwar period. One historian recognized the

contribution of psychoanalysis to a growing “maturity ethic” that partly related to the value-system discussed in this paper, but his work failed to examine how psychoanalysts contributed to its construction and reinforcement in public culture during the 1950s. With an eye focused more on the erosion of both the value-system and the popularity of psychoanalysis in the late sixties, his analysis fails to survey the construction of both.¹⁴ By examining more closely psychoanalysis’ intersection with and contribution to key social, political, and intellectual trends in the 1950s, this paper expands this and the other few published histories of psychoanalysis in the United States. It also offers new contributions to the literature on psychoanalysis by raising questions about the discipline’s role in constructing and reinforcing postwar norms including the new nuclear family. Its discussion interacts with scholarship exploring the social, political, and intellectual history of postwar America more generally, and it also raises serious questions about the objectivity of the social sciences, their potential for exploitation, and the effect of both on the politics of the United States.

Psychoanalysis was splashed across the pages of popular media in the 1950s. Covering one of the hottest intellectual vogues of the decade, news articles publicized lectures given at professional conferences cautioning parents on their approach to discussing the “birds and the bees.” Multiple columns of the *New York Times* reviewed 37 years of research resulting in the

¹⁴ Eli Zaretsky, *Political Freud: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), Ch. 5; To follow the history of intellectuals making connections between experience, personality, and mature behavior representing healthy development consider first post- Holocaust studies exploring the disassembly of one’s personality including, Bruno Bettelheim, “Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations,” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 38, no. 4 (1943), 417-452; For the role of experience in personality development as well as mature behaviors representing healthy development consider Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton and Co., 1950) and especially Harry Stack Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* (New York: Norton and Co., 1953).

theory that blushing was actually a call for attention rather a sign of shying away from it. Topics subjected to a psychoanalytic interpretations in the media included coping with thinning hair before the age of 35 or the mystery behind Marilyn Monroe's sex appeal. One lengthy article in *New York Times Magazine* mused on the popularity of fur accessories among women and warned when a vacuum cleaner replaced a mink coat as a gift from a man, he no longer perceived her as a proverbial fox but instead a mother hen.¹⁵

More often than not, the inclusion of psychoanalytic perspectives on such apparently newsworthy items was without ridicule or irony. Some articles did highlight the apparent absurdity of psychoanalytic interpretations by lampooning its prevalence in popular culture. Crabgrass caused "suburban neurosis" according to one cheeky journalist. Others wondered at the Oedipal nature of Eisenhower's popularity. One journalist wondered if short therapeutic sessions for diplomatic leaders, made easier by installing a couch in the White House, might provide for better foreign policies.¹⁶ Still, these ironic portrayals of psychoanalysis were few and far between. Even as a subject of ridicule in the nation's most popular newspapers, these articles testified to the prevalence and popularity of psychoanalysis during the fifties. More often than not, psychoanalytic perspectives were considered seriously and included as commentary on many of the most important social and political issues of the decade. From homeownership and

¹⁵ Dorothy Barclay, "Warning is Given on Sex Education," *NYT*, Dec. 28, 1951, 15; Emma Harrison, "Doctor Terms Blushing a Sign of One's Desire for Attention," *NYT*, Dec. 6, 1959, 78; Gerard Walker, "Baldness Unbared," *NYT Magazine*, Jan. 4, 1959, 62; Maurice Zolotow, "The Mystery of Marilyn Monroe," *American Weekly*, Oct. 2, 1955, 10-12; Martha Weinman, "Status Seekers in Fur: For Woman, Queen of the Fur-Bearing Animals Is the Road To Euphoria Paved With Mink, Sable, Or That New Exotic, Hamster?," *NYT Magazine*, Oct. 4, 1959, 18, 20, & 22.

¹⁶ Marybeth Weston, "Suburban Neurosis: Crabgrass" *NYT Magazine*, Jul. 24, 1960, 21; Eric Sevareid, "Father, Dear Father, We'll Vote For You Now," *Washington Post*, Sep. 16, 1956, E-2; Arthur Krock, "In The Nation: There Are Psychiatrists in the Treaty Room," *NYT*, Jan. 26, 1956, 28.

family life to the threat of totalitarianism, psychoanalysts offered, and the media publicized, their much sought after expertise.

The roots of this public currency lay in the Second World War. The cataclysm that had rescued the US from severe depression and provided 12 million ‘jobs’ for a roughly equal number of previously unemployed men, also helped establish the popularity and public power of psychoanalysis.¹⁷ On December 7, 1941 the army had a total of only 35 psychiatrists. But, as the branches of the armed services continued to accept volunteers and deal with an increasing number of men drafted through the Selective Service Act, military psychiatrists were also needed in greater numbers. Fifteen million men were eventually examined for military service with nearly all undergoing at least a two-minute psychological screening. While surprisingly cursory, these exams resulted in the rejection of 12% of all potential servicemen for reasons as far-ranging as psychopathy, homosexual tendencies, or impulsivity. Over one million additional potential servicemen received more extensive exams for psychosis or neurosis, but military psychiatrists were perhaps most relied upon to accurately diagnose and treat “battle fatigue.” The demand was indeed great and business was brisk; 50% of all medical discharges in the US forces during World War II were “neuropsychiatric casualties.” By the end of the war the US army alone graduated 1,000 psychiatrists from its training school.¹⁸

Brief induction examinations constituted a remarkable example of the efficiency of modern psychological scientists who, in two minutes, could deny to individuals the surest path to

¹⁷ Lawrence R. Samuel, *Shrink: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), xviii & 73; Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 280, and *Political Freud*, 156; Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 187.

¹⁸ Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 188-204; Louis Menand, “Freud, Anxiety, and the Cold War,” in *After Freud Left: A Century of Psychoanalysis in America*, ed. John Burnham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 196.

“full citizenship,” identification with the best of the “Greatest Generation,” and generous government benefits including free college tuition and no-interest home loans.¹⁹ The process also revealed the growing power of scientific professionals in modern America. After all, psychologists were tasked with judging which citizens possessed the personality traits, social values, and sometimes political ideals, on which the nation would depend. It was one of the most extensive and important early examples of the psychological disciplines defining the norms of national public culture and exerting pressure on individuals to adhere or adjust to these norms.

While the mental health sciences overall gained ground because of the war, psychoanalysis in particular benefited, because psychoanalysts occupied key positions of leadership in the military. William Menninger, a prominent psychoanalyst, was appointed the Army’s Chief Psychiatrist in 1943, and he actively sought psychoanalysts for military service. He also placed colleagues in positions of leadership and ordered all Army psychiatrists to familiarize themselves with the principles of psychoanalysis. This once largely eccentric discipline experienced its greatest early expansion in size and influence through one of the nation’s largest institutions—also at the height of its power and influence. Shortly after the war, the number of psychoanalysts in America had increased four-fold.²⁰

Military service also helped strengthen the public influence of the discipline. Print media publicized the faithful national service and noted the success of military psychiatrists like Menninger. *Life* magazine reported to millions how psychiatrists had successfully treated battle-

¹⁹ For a discussion of the “bureaucratic gates” of induction, James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: WWII Americans and the Age of Big Government*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 203- 208; The moniker “Greatest Generation” was popularized in, Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

²⁰ In addition to Menninger discussed below, the Air Force’s Chief of Psychiatry was a psychoanalyst. Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 190, 198-199, & 211.

fatigued soldiers during the war and then looked to psychiatrists' future service to the nation. The magazine found continuing psychiatric expertise would be vital to the nation as millions of American men attempted to re-acclimate to civilian life after years of bloody combat.²¹

Psychiatric experts, however, were not above self-promotion or stoking concerns about soldiers' psychological demobilization.²² Dr. Martin Grotjahn of Chicago's Institute of Psychoanalysis publicly implored the Veteran's Administration to continue outpatient psychotherapy for veterans.²³ Lawrence Kubie, a military psychiatrist who also practiced psychoanalysis, warned the nation that it needed immediately to invest \$100 million to train new mental health professionals. Should the country shirk this duty, he cautioned, it might result in \$6 billion in future costs for institutionalizing veterans for mental illnesses.²⁴

Congress soon passed the Mental Health Act of 1946 establishing the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) with an initial budget of \$18 million for treatment facilities and psychological research. Of the \$156 million awarded by NIMH during the fifteen years from 1948 to 1963, only \$3.97 million was disbursed for psychoanalytic research, training, and treatment facilities. While only 2.5% of mental health funding during that period, it still demonstrated a growing interest in psychoanalysis as well as a power possessed by the media and mental health professionals to shape public discourse and affect public policy. More importantly, much of this money went toward educating new psychoanalysts. Though a comparatively small sum, the funds helped unify psychoanalysis and consolidate its promoted

²¹ Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 285.

²² "Ills of Veterans Called Magnified," *NYT*, Mar. 25, 1945, 31.

²³ "Group Aid Is Urged for Mental Ills," *NYT*, May 28, 1946, 21.

²⁴ Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 208-209.

values early in the postwar period. A tradition of training required aspiring psychoanalysts to be analyzed by their mentors. Divergent theories or opinions were discouraged, questioned, or could be a cause for failure to matriculate. As a result, the training process has been characterized by former psychoanalysts as “not a matter of learning certain skills but of absorbing certain values.” Further, those admitted to training during the era were largely a homogenous group. At Menninger’s training facility in 1958, most were married men with eighty-five per cent raised by parents who were not divorced or separated. Ninety-eight per cent of student’s parents were in the top twenty per cent of income earners during the Depression, and two-thirds of the trainees were over the age of 35. Homosexuals, like others deemed mentally unstable, were barred from training.²⁵

Like the massive Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, the Mental Health Act of 1946 demonstrated a legitimate concern for the successful (and peaceable) readjustment to civilian life by America’s well-trained, battle-weary soldiers. And while soldiers readjusted to American life in university classrooms and their new low-interest mortgaged single-family homes, they also readjusted on the psychoanalyst’s couch, or at Menninger’s new clinic in Topeka, Kansas. Just as historians have noted assumptions about certain social practices and cultural values underlying the aim and execution of the GI Bill, the psychological readjustment of the citizen soldiers often promoted the same goals—industriousness, men as primary breadwinners, and a new norm: a nuclear-family comprised of mother, father, and children living in a single-family home. These

²⁵ Quote is from Stephen Frosh, *For and Against Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7. Similar sentiments are expressed in Steiner, “Hermeneutics or Hermes-mess?,” 76; Hale, *Rise & Crisis*, 209, 221-230, & 252; Menand, “Freud, Anxiety, and the Cold War,” 196.

values and ideals also permeated psychoanalysts' public pronouncements in news media during the era.²⁶

Psychoanalysts, overwhelmingly male, characterized traditional gender roles and separate spheres for the sexes as normal throughout the period. With men devoted to work outside the home, domestic labors like cooking, cleaning, and stewardship of their child's development were the exclusive domain of women. Before even asserting the personal and social benefits of such an arrangement, psychoanalysts relied on their reputation as scientific experts to place the force of nature behind traditional gender roles. Employing biological determinism and characterizing alternatives as abnormal and deviant, psychoanalysts offered a seemingly self-evident, indisputable foundation for separate gender spheres. Natural dispositions of "yielding" females and "assertive" males reinforced passive and dominant roles for the sexes. By this rationale, separate roles were not a matter of convenience or choice; they were inarguable biological facts. The weight of science, good mental health, and the expertise of psychoanalysts firmly supported separate spheres and the reassertion of traditional gender roles.²⁷

Most often psychoanalysts held that traditional gender roles offered both personal and social benefits for men and women. There were indeed exceptions among psychoanalysts who

²⁶ For a more sustained examination of the values promoted by the GI Bill, Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 253-257; Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 137-143 & 157. The "new" nuclear family was not abnormal but to this point had been atypical. What would later be called "extended family" had previously been normative for families living under a single roof. May, *Homeward Bound*, 8-26.

²⁷ Martin Tolchin, "Wife Who Wins Battles May Find She Lost War," *NYT*, Mar. 24, 1960, 28; "Highland Park Club to Hear Psychiatrist, Evanston Women to See Travel Film," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 13, 1957, N-12; Gerald Walker, "Psychoanalyzing the Couch: Do Analysts Have a Problem All Their Own—A 'Couch Complex'?" A Non-Analyst Analyzes the Couch's Role In Psychiatry," *NYT* Apr. 13, 1958, 20 & 47; Morton M. Hunt, "How the Analyst Stands the Pace: All Day Long Patients Pour Out Their Troubles to Him. Why Aren't the Troubles Catching?," *NYT* Nov. 24, 1957, 22 & 86; Paul Rosenfels, *Psychoanalysis and Civilization* (New York: Libra Publishers, Inc., 1962), 14-19 & 164; See also Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 276-277; Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 277 & 296. For the reassertion of traditional gender roles after "radical alterations" during the Great Depression and World War II, see May, *Homeward Bound*, 8.

encouraged the financial and emotional responsibility of fathers, or the capability of women to have both motherhood and a career (a woman could “gracefully make any transition *demand*ed of her”).²⁸ Typically, however, the presentation of psychoanalyst’s expertise on issues of home and hearth resoundingly promoted the personal and familial benefits of traditional gender roles. One particularly illustrative example that received wider coverage than its original *Harper’s* audience—even as far as the daily paper for Hendersonville, NC— was Dr. Milton Sapirstein’s “Decorating the Home: A Special Neurosis in Women.” Sapirstein considered anxieties caused by home decorating on par with marriage, childbirth, or loss of a loved one. It was such a singular moment for women that it “test[ed] their femininity as men’s masculinity is tested in battle.”²⁹ Although stressful, decorating a home was for Sapirstein the ultimate expression of femininity and thus one of the highest callings for women in the 1950s. Equating home decoration with motherhood and marriage trivialized the challenges of married life and child rearing while dismissing possible contributions of women outside the home and in the workplace. Sapirstein, however, also counseled that home decoration should not be reluctantly pursued but instead done with an aim toward self-fulfillment. Adorning one’s home was not tedious or frivolous but instead a way to realize one’s appropriate identity—that of mother and

²⁸ Emphasis added. Dorothy Barclay, “Family Life Held More Than Riches: Psychoanalyst Says Father’s Close Ties With Children Outrank Big Income,” *NYT*, Oct. 4, 1950, 35; “Seminar to Consider Problems of Women,” *NYT*, Feb. 4, 1953, 30.

²⁹ Milton R. Sapirstein & Alis de Sola, “Decorating the Home: A Special Neurosis in Women,” *Harper’s Magazine*, September 1955, 34-39; Roi Ottley, “Roi Ottley Says,” *Chicago Defender*, Nov. 26, 1955, 3; “Decorating Home Test For Women: Dangerous Period for Average Housewife, Says Psychiatrist,” *Times-News* (Hendersonville, NC), Aug. 30, 1955, 4.

housewife. Rather than a duty, it was personally beneficial and biologically and psychologically normal.³⁰

Outfitting a home, according to Sapirstein, also represented a reflection of a woman's innermost desires. Billowy cushions reflected for many anxiety over small breasts, or they might symbolize just the opposite—satisfaction with large, matronly bosoms.³¹ His statements marked further evidence of his assumptions that the preeminent conscious and unconscious concerns of women were devoted to appearances and fulfilling their expected roles as mothers and wives. It was also illustrative of the subjectivity of psychoanalytic interpretations. Psychoanalysis has been described as possessing an “elastic interpretive license, allowing the analyst to be right every time.”³² Despite characterizations of psychoanalysis as a science, Sapirstein essentially had it both ways, claiming the selection of couch cushions might demonstrate anxiety *or* satisfaction. Still, this type of paradoxical interpretation did not undermine the authority or perceived scientific expertise of psychoanalysts. That media pundits failed to question such opportunistic reasoning testified to the existing faith in and authority of psychoanalysts in the postwar period.

Print media's own postwar portrayals of psychoanalysts also reinforced the normalcy of traditional gender roles by characterizing psychoanalysts in illustrations and stories as male. Most often, the psychoanalyst character was reminiscent of the image of its founder, Sigmund Freud—a serious, scientific academic who was indistinguishable from other middle-class businessmen, teachers, or dentists. Stroking his well-manicured beard, he deeply

³⁰ For similar sentiments during the era from experts in another field, consider the writings of the male President of Mills College (an all-girls school): Lynn White, *Educating Our Daughters: A Challenge to the Colleges* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1950).

³¹ Sapirstein & de Sola, “Decorating the Home,” 35.

³² Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 291.

contemplated the problems of discontents and civilization in his modestly decorated office in a New York brownstone.³³ This standard caricature reinforced not only assumptions about the gender of scientific authorities but set the analyst and his work within a firmly middle-class environment. The psychoanalyst both advocated and embodied the new norms of American life.

Some pivotal figures in psychoanalysis were indeed female including Anna Freud, Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, and Melanie Klein, and they were sometimes recognized in both the professional community and the media.³⁴ Yet even while offering an example of a professional woman possessing scientific expertise, popular portrayals of women, like the caricature, actually reinforced assumptions about the defined, limited roles of women. Media coverage also offered the opinions of female psychoanalysts in areas deemed more relevant to women, so their opinions represented a sort of expert female knowledge. It was indeed expert knowledge but nonetheless limited to topics deemed appropriately feminine. Female psychoanalysts offered insights into marriage relations, child development, and social work. When advertising local community talks by female psychoanalysts, major urban news outlets might include these among other activities deemed relevant including the Friday Teacup Circle's seminar titled, "Good Cooks Use Herbs."³⁵

Setting discussions of appropriate gender roles in the single-family home between married couples also implicitly promoted married life, but psychoanalysts explicitly extolled the

³³ Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 276 & 290.

³⁴ Ibid., The important disciplinary contributions of female psychoanalysts is also thoroughly explored in Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, Ch.'s 8 & 10.

³⁵ "Seminar to Consider Problems of Women," *NYT*, Feb. 4, 1953, 30; Lucy Freeman, "Slum Houses Cite Mental Aid Gains: Neighborhood Settlements Tell of Success of Experiment, First in the Country," *NYT* Mar. 18, 1951, 58; "Highland Park Club to Hear Psychiatrist, Evanston Women to See Travel Film," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 13, 1957, N-12; Lucy Freeman, "Pushing Children to Learn Decried: Psychoanalyst Warns of Strain If Child is Stimulated to Precocious Actions," *NYT*, Dec. 10, 1951, 25.

desirability and emotional necessity of marriage. Instead of being moved by selfishness, individuality, or narcissism, the properly developed individual was married, stayed married, or remarried in the event of an absolutely unavoidable divorce or loss of spouse. Advice about marital troubles assumed that in all but the most extreme cases the inability to work things out represented “basic failings in the individual personality” rather than mismatched relationships. In this calculus, marriage was normal, and problems resulted not from issues in the union but the individual’s inability to actualize the institution of marriage.³⁶

Pressure to make marriages work also predictably demanded that couples do so for the sake of their children. “Children need not suffer from growing up in a single-parent home,” one psychoanalysts advised. Anger, delinquency, or even homicidal tendencies might develop in children raised by a single mother.³⁷ The possibility of bringing up a murderous psychopath was a compelling incentive for women to work things out or to remarry as soon as possible.

Setting discussions of appropriate gender roles in the single-family home implicitly promoted normative sexuality, but psychoanalysts explicitly advocated heterosexuality as well.³⁸ Beyond Sapirstein and other individual commentators, both psychoanalysis and psychiatry at the institutional level characterized homosexuality as pathological until 1973.³⁹ Under this categorization, both non-normative sexuality and the deviation from established gender roles

³⁶ Bill Brinkley, “Psychiatrists Place Blame on Personal Shortcomings: Human Faults Get Blame for Divorce,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 5, 1949, 1; Emanuel K. Schwartz, “Life Without Father,” *NYT Magazine*, September 4, 1960, 22.

³⁷ Emma Harrison, “Parents Are Seen In Peril From Son: Psychiatrist Say Liberation of Mother Makes Them Target of His Anger,” *NYT*, Feb. 22, 1959, 77.

³⁸ Robert Lindner, *Must You Conform?* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1956), 36-41; Gabriel A. Almond, *The Appeals of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 258-300; Mary Haworth, “His Evil Reflects a Grudge,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 11 1953, 28.

³⁹ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s*, (New York: Hill & Wang, 2012), 93.

were abnormal, and worse, evidence of mental illness. With such an understanding, Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, first published in 1948, augmented these concerns. By suggesting that homosexuality was much more prevalent in American society than previously known, Kinsey set off alarms even though he hoped it might remove some of the stigmas surrounding homosexuality.⁴⁰ With this concern, however, arose an opportunity for psychoanalysts to bolster their public status and advance behavioral norms. Asserting homosexuality was indeed scientifically abnormal resonated with popular views about homosexuality; the public was told what it expected and wanted to hear. The chorus of condemnation also reinforced the normality of heterosexuality. For the 89% of American society that even Kinsey recognized exclusively practiced heterosexuality, psychoanalysts assured the majority that its representatives were normal and natural.

The equally respected brother of William Menninger, Karl Menninger, directly objected to what he saw as Alfred Kinsey's over association of sexuality with nature. While admitting that homosexuality was potentially natural or a result of biology, Menninger argued its social abhorrence was still a cause of pathology. Suffering from widespread ostracism, the homosexual, in Menninger's estimation, could not enjoy good mental health. Sidestepping its biological foundation, his characterization revealed that homosexuality was, from a scientific opinion, wrong because society deemed it wrong. The adaptability of his judgments demonstrates clearly how psychoanalysis could be used as a "social tool" to reinforce norms that were based on their acceptance by society rather than their biological or scientific foundation. Psychoanalysis justified existing values and prevented the "subversion of [the] Cold War norms

⁴⁰ Hale, *Rise and Crisis*, 296-299. Alfred Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, & Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W.S. Saunders Co., 1948).

of hearth and home” by explicitly associating acts outside of social norms, however natural, with deviance and mental illness.⁴¹

Many considered homosexuality, however, an effect of negative social or environmental influences rather than natural. It was a choice by a disturbed individual whose interest was informed neither by biology nor romantic and sexual preference. Instead, homosexuality was a consequence of maladjustment or wayward development in childhood. If psychoanalysts addressed the psychological confusion and disturbance leading to homosexuality, they then could ostensibly cure patients of their abnormal sexual preferences. Richard C. Robertiello, like many others, detailed the curative potential of psychoanalysis for homosexuals in his *Voyage from Lesbos*. Likewise, the celebrated author of *Rebel Without A Cause*, which in reality only the title had any resemblance to the film, similarly assured readers psychoanalysis could sort out an individual’s homosexual confusion.⁴² Psychoanalysts once again advertised their willingness to perform a public service not only for individual Americans but American society as a whole. An individual and apparently growing social malady could be eradicated, ensuring even those considered the most aberrant or perverted could, with the willing help of psychoanalysis, be brought into conformity with normal sexual behavior. For those practicing heterosexuality already, they could take comfort once again in the knowledge that they were right, natural, and normal.

By defining homosexuality as abnormal and heterosexuality, marriage, and clearly defined gender roles within the home as normal, psychoanalysts in the 1950s helped construct

⁴¹Karl Menninger, “What the Girls Told,” *Saturday Review* 36 (Sept. 26, 1953), 21 & 30. Samuel, *Shrink*, xvii; Self, *All in the Family*, 92.

⁴² Richard C. Robertiello, *Voyage from Lesbos: The Psychoanalysis of a Female Homosexual* (New York: Citadel Press, 1959); Lindner, *Must You Conform?*, 38-41.

and reinforce a new American dream—life in a middle-class single (nuclear) family home. As fascinating as it may sound, psychoanalysts were not subliminally peddling houses in a conspiracy involving the federal government and Abraham and William Levitt (famed builders of the nation’s Levittowns). Nevertheless, the normalization of heterosexuality, marriage, and clearly defined gender roles did indeed contribute to the normalization and popularization of the new American dream.

The newly defined family was new in a number of distinct ways: Domestic responsibilities were not divided among generations; mother stayed at home and cooked, cleaned, and took care of the children. Grandfather did not contribute his part-time paycheck or his Social Security payments; Father went to work and provided enough financially for his family solely by his efforts. Children did not go off to work; *momma’s little helper* was in the backyard, on a bike ride, or in the living room with his neighborhood friends.⁴³

The formulation of the new nuclear family in the postwar era was in many ways was a consequence of increasing geographic mobility. Due to growing opportunities for work in new industries in new regions after the war, individuals increasingly departed their home towns and left behind extended family. The local communities in America’s heartland and its small towns no longer offered the same economic opportunities. Ambitious breadwinners, better educated because of the GI Bill, sought out higher wages in hotbeds of modern industry in California, the Northwest, Texas, and the eastern seaboard. Fast-growing corporate businesses in the aerospace, plastics, and computers industries attracted skilled workers and potential managers from all over the nation. In areas around new corporate office parks, builders quickly constructed affordable

⁴³ May, *Homeward Bound*, 24-25; Cohen, *Consumers’ Republic*, Ch.’s 5& 6; Cullen, *American Dream*, 136; Samuel, “American Dream,” 57.

single-family homes close to shopping malls with wide parking spaces designed for enormous tail-fin Buicks.⁴⁴

Amongst all this change, however, commentators increasingly spoke of the type of “suburban neurosis” that one journalist had joked was caused by crabgrass.⁴⁵ Settled in suburban communities in what William Whyte called the “second great melting pot,” individuals were bereft from traditional community or familial attachments. Status anxieties increased but so did concerns about loneliness, alienation, and a lack of meaningful relationships in suburban life and corporate work.⁴⁶ Transplanted suburbanites could, however, take comfort in lives furnished by unprecedented opportunity and prosperity; status anxieties were far more palatable than unemployment or privation. The home also provided love and warmth, privacy, clearly defined identities, and more satisfying sexual relationships for married couples. Families could also seek shelter from the hostilities of the Cold War world.⁴⁷ Whether one chose to adorn their split-level ranch house with pink flamingos in the yard or a Monet reproduction print in the foyer, psychoanalysts assured Americans suburban life was not only normal but a dream come true.

The new American dream was not a promissory note, however. It could not be achieved without hard work just as the old dreams of Americans had been realized. Psychoanalysts gave

⁴⁴ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 24-48; Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 194-200 & Ch. 6; For discussions of the influences of war production, military service, and postwar defense industry on geographic mobility, see Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 113-116.

⁴⁵ Marybeth Weston, “Suburban Neurosis: Crabgrass” *NYT Magazine*, July 24, 1960, 21; May, *Homeward Bound*, 26.

⁴⁶ Whyte, *Organization Man*, 299-300; Mills, *White Collar*, 240-249.

⁴⁷ May, *Homeward Bound*, 13-15.

this traditional American value new force in the fifties by tying it to the persuasive force of the new American dream and associating it with normalcy and good mental health. The Menninger brothers encapsulated the importance of dedicated, disciplined work to help realize the American dream claiming the “fundamentals in life [were]...the business of making love and the business of making a living.”⁴⁸ Another psychoanalyst warned listlessness and boredom were not only undesirable traits but potential founts for depression and anxiety. Allowed to grow, such loafing might cause neurosis or psychopathic rage. Another psychoanalyst claimed to have cured a man of his twenty-year battle with colitis, measuring his therapeutic success not just with his physical improvement but his ability to take on a new job.⁴⁹ Hard work and productivity were, in this system of thought, components of normalcy and good mental health.

Should Americans still crack up, these values were not just goals of normal, positive mental health but a means to it. Those seeking help from the famous Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas were expected to bring a good work ethic to their therapy. This “modern Vienna” promised results through hard work—the kind celebrated by the hardy American individual. Egalitarian and rugged, the “once-idle millionaire work[ed] off his psychosis digging dandelions or chopping wood the same as anyone else.”⁵⁰ Employing a model of work therapy through in part, manual labor, the Menninger Clinic offered not only to treat mental illness but also effectively return patients to “useful citizenship” through their own, and their patients,’

⁴⁸ Russell Jacoby, *The Repression of Psychoanalysis: Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 141.

⁴⁹ Lucy Freeman, “Moods of Excess Laid to Opposite: A Defensive Masking of True Feeling Described at Closing Session of Psychoanalysts,” *NYT*, May 12, 1952, 25; Lucy Freeman, “Pushing Children,” 25.

⁵⁰ Norma Lee Browning, “A New Idea Cures Sick Minds: Eight Times Out of Ten, These Courageous Men Proved, the Mentally Ill Can Be Brought Back to Useful Citizenship,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1956, G-23.

adherence to the principles of productivity and efficiency. The Menninger Clinic boasted a success rate of 80%—almost double the national rate.

Other psychoanalysts likewise promoted their own efficiency but also promised time-saving therapeutic techniques. Dr. Abraham Low's "Recovery, Inc." advertised a miraculous recovery rate of 90-95% through a "rigid disciplinarian system of self-control and will power." Dedication of the individual will for just ten to twenty minutes twice per week could cure most mental illnesses in just two to three months. Simplistic and efficient, Low's therapeutic regimen approximated Norman Vincent Peale's approach to regenerating meaning in the lives of lonely, atomized seekers through the "picturize, prayerize, and actualize" method of *The Power of Positive Thinking*.⁵¹ Recovery, Inc. was, however, even more forceful, dealing in "plain-talk" that demanded participants will themselves out of mental illness. Patients were "forbidden to waste time yakkety-yakking for sympathy" and were expected to give up defeatist talk and self-pity. Streamlined therapy was so attractive and readers were so impressed with its promised efficiency (especially considering the typical investment in psychoanalytic therapy), one editorial director of National Research Bureau, Inc. promised the program would be recommended to "employees of manufacturing plants in other parts of the country."⁵² Psychoanalysis by Dr. Low was not only tellingly incorporated but ready for distribution.

Another psychoanalyst wholly jettisoned Freudian orthodoxy for what he called a more efficient "existential psychiatry," A model of the promised efficiency, productivity and hard

⁵¹ Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1952); Carol V.R. George, *God's Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale & the Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 137-140.

⁵² Norma Lee Browning, "The Amazing Story of Recovery, Inc.: Chicago Doctor's Self-Help Technique Enables Mental Patients to Treat Own Emotional Ills by Aiding One Another," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 3, 1954, F-12; Irving Stone, "Recovery Inc.," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun. 27, 1954, F-2.

work which patients' behavior should mirror, Dr. Jordan Scher complained "too much time is wasted investigating a patient's problems instead of solving them." Like Recovery, Inc., he stressed the individual's responsibility for overcoming psychic troubles. "The biggest problem with the mentally ill," he claimed, "[was] that they were chronically underloaded with work and responsibility." Scher unequivocally outlined the centrality of work and productivity to American life as well as its role in contributing to good mental health. He also promised to be an efficient therapist who would not "allow people to do what they damn please just because they [tried] to sell you a bill of goods that they [were] sick." Rather than help patients "understand themselves" or healthily express their identities, he would fix them and return them to proper functioning like a human mechanic. Patients were expected to take responsibility for themselves, fulfill an appropriate social role, and contribute to productive endeavors even if in Dr. Scher's treatment, physical force was necessary to achieve these goals.⁵³ Psychoanalysts promised that Americans in therapy could be made to conform—with a high degree of efficiency—to the values of hard work and productivity in work, and in their personal lives. In doing so, they reflected and reinforced industriousness as a key value of Americans.

Psychoanalysts assured both their clients and society as a whole, that they were attempting to handle what was by the mid-fifties beginning to be called a "national mental health problem."⁵⁴ Dissatisfaction with suburban social structures, alienation from work in corporate bureaucracies, loss of identity, lack of fulfillment, and fears of divorce and homosexuality—

⁵³ Norma Lee Browning, "Revolt in Psychiatry: Could Freud Have Been Wrong? Yes, Says Dr. Jordan Scher of Northwestern Who Insists That Some of the 'Mentally Ill' Are Not Really Ill," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 27, 1960, B-12 & 14.

⁵⁴ Lucy Freeman, "Slum Houses," 58. Robert K. Plumb, "Science Gaining on Mental Ills: 'Giant Step' Taken as New Drugs Reinforce Impetus of Revitalized Research," *NYT* Jan. 15, 1956, 1 & 80.

these were contributing to an epidemic of middle-class unhappiness. Anxieties about nuclear annihilation and communist subversion only exacerbated concerns. Commentators in the *New York Times* somberly recognized that Americans were living in an “Age of Anxiety.”

Contemporaries were alarmed to hear that among Americans estimates for the risk of hospitalization for mental illness were 1 in 10. “Scholars, writers, and men of medicine” called for a “National Mental Health Week” to raise awareness. The editor of the *Times* declared psychological research and treatment must be expanded. Those who engaged in research and treatment were “heroic” and “the best assurance...that man ultimately will conquer all evils wherever they may arise.”⁵⁵ And psychoanalysts heard the call. While psychoanalysts were helping Americans transition to the new realities of postwar domestic life, they also reassured Americans the United States would be victorious over its national and ideological enemies. Psychoanalysts allayed fears of communism and, in delegitimizing communist ideology, reinforced contemporary American values and ideals. The American dream, psychoanalysts assured Americans, was normal, desirable, and safe.

In publicly characterizing the Communist Party in America as a “haven for neurotics,” which attracted mostly the maladjusted or otherwise mentally ill, most psychoanalysts were indeed relatively consistent in their views on communism.⁵⁶ Psychoanalytic profiles of communists publicized by news media were generally simplified and tended to focus on the party’s exploitation of an individual’s weakness, anxieties, or mental instabilities. Coverage of one analysand, an Air Force pilot and later Hollywood film producer, detailed how he reformed

⁵⁵ “Topics of the Times,” *NYT* May 4, 1956, 24.

⁵⁶ AP, “Calls Communist Party Haven for Neurotics,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 18, 1953, B-4. ; Dictators’ Appeal Laid to Anxieties: Psychoanalyst Tells Session That People Yield Freedom Because of Weakness,” *NYT*, Dec. 9, 1951, 83.

with the help of psychotherapy. After he originally “fell in with what [he] thought were do-gooders,” he now firmly believed that “95 per cent of the party members [were] emotionally and mentally disturbed the way [he] was.”⁵⁷

More sustained studies similarly found “emotional conflict and maladjustment...to be especially significant factors” in membership in the Communist Party.⁵⁸ “Substituting the Party for their neurosis,” members preferred belonging to a social group and willing overlooked obvious inconsistencies between communism’s promises and actual practices. Having joined a group because of an ill-formed desire for social reform, “not purges, not deportations, not concentration camps nor Arctic slavery, not betrayals not false imprisonments nor assassinations” could shake their loyalty. Such profound cognitive dissonance demonstrated to a psychoanalyst malfunctioned reasoning. The motivations of Communist Party members were not political or ideological but were instead emotional, illogical, and based in psychic vulnerabilities. The national and ideological enemies of the United States were, according to psychoanalysts, abnormal *and* weak.⁵⁹

Beneath these clinical diagnoses of Communist Party members lay a number of assumptions that revealed many of the social values and political ideals prejudiced elsewhere. Some patients’ “incapacity to assert themselves professionally” caused the emotional imbalance that drove them to belong to the Party. Women who failed to adhere to appropriate gender roles were another neurotic type drawn to communism. Deviation from middle-class standards of

⁵⁷ Seymour Korman, “He’s Psychoanalyzed; Reds Kick Him Out,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 24, 1953. 4.

⁵⁸ Almond, *Appeals of Communism*, xi.

⁵⁹ Lindner, *Must You Conform?*, 80-93, and “Political Creed and Character,” *Psychoanalysis* 2, no. 2 (1953), 10-33. The misguided emotional needs of Communist Party members are also detailed in, Almond, *Appeals of Communism*, 258-288.

respectability, particularly for a sexually active women, revealed yet another type of “neurotic susceptibility.” Further, repression of latent homosexuality might result in transference of one’s own repression on to others—by supporting the work of CP-USA or other totalitarian groups.⁶⁰ This intersection of anticommunism and the promotion of clearly defined gender roles, middle-class morality, normative sexuality, and even a strong work ethic, drew together neatly the equation of a particular set of social values and political ideals with good mental health by psychoanalysts in the 1950s. Deviation from norms not only revealed or risked insanity but supported the national enemies of the United States. Such a suggestion was a powerfully persuasive force reinforcing social and political norms.

Not all psychoanalysts volunteered to help fight the Red Menace or even managed to stay above suspicion. Analysts in positions of authority themselves were publicly outed as communist sympathizers and even spies. The Federal Bureau of Investigation surveilled a number of practicing therapists and professors, and some were pressured by the FBI to inform on patients’ communist activities during the height of the Red Scare. Some did break confidentiality to provide information for investigators, but most often investigators faced resistance from psychoanalysts.⁶¹

Some analysts offered muted objections to or criticisms of intense anticommunism. The largest professional organization, the American Psychoanalytic Association (APA), objected to

⁶⁰ Almond, *Appeals of Communism*, 258; Robert Lindner, *The Fifty-Minute Hour* (New York: Other Press, 1955), 213; T. W. Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers: 1950), 776-778.

⁶¹ “Slochower, On Eve of New Trial, Resigns From Brooklyn College: Professor Accused in Red Inquiries Is Held Ineligible to Retire—Higher Education Unit Board to Rule,” *NYT*, Feb. 27, 1957, 14; “Martha Stern Praises Reds: Hails Khrushchev and Moscow Scene,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 3, 1958, 1; Elizabeth Ann Danto, “‘Have You No Shame’: American Redbaiting of Europe’s Psychoanalysts,” in *Psychoanalysis and Politics: Histories of Psychoanalysis Under Conditions of Restricted Political Freedom*, ed. Mariano B. Plotkin & Joy Damousi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 219-221.

loyalty oaths in public service and university employment and publicly recommended revision of the 1950 McCarran Internal Security Act to ease restrictions on the emigration of European psychoanalysts.⁶² A prominent critic of anticommunism, Erich Fromm, whose “Humanistic Communitarianism Socialism” offered an alternative democratic socialist vision of society, equally condemned American capitalism and Soviet communism. A few even raised concerns about the growing hysteria penetrating civil society and family life. Some psychoanalysts expressed unease with the anxiety and fear that the Civil Defense Administration’s “Duck and Cover” film unnecessarily instilled in children.⁶³ Despite the above outliers, the overwhelming majority of psychoanalytic opinions were, however, relatively consistent and vocal in their opposition to communism.

The hefty analysis of the totalitarian mind in Theodor Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality*—one of the most cited and least read works of the fifties—also used psychoanalysis to codify susceptible personality types that deviated from liberal social values and political ideals. Of eleven distinct personality types, as measured by their f-scale (for propensity for fascist attitudes), the “Authoritarian” showed the worst “somasochistic resolution of the Oedipal complex.” Adorno determined that the “Jew frequently [became] a substitute for the hated father,” even though at the same time, the authoritarian personality idealized “the father.”⁶⁴ Attraction to fascism or a penchant for extreme ethnocentrism were, like communism and deviation from social norms in America, based not on political ideology but unresolved

⁶² Danto, “‘Have You No Shame,’” 219; Lucy Freeman, “Moods of Excess Laid to Opposite: A Defensive Masking of True Feeling Described at Closing Session of Psychoanalysts,” *NYT*, May 12, 1952, 25;.

⁶³ Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (New York: Routledge, 1955), 350- 354; Erich Fromm, “Freud, Friends, and Feuds,” *Saturday Review* 41 (Jun. 14, 1958); Dorothy Barclay, “Film On Atom War Bad for Children: Experts Think Movie Promotes Rather Than Eases Tensions, But Some Aren’t So Sure,” *NYT*, Nov. 21, 1952, 29.

⁶⁴ Adorno, *Authoritarian Personality*, 759-762.

psychological conflicts. The most immediate danger from personalities drawn to totalitarianism was the “Psychopath” who would do the “ ‘dirty work’ of a fascist movement.” This extreme personality was drawn from the “modern unemployed.” Such people were likely to be inspired and organized by “colonial adventurers, racing motorists, and airplane aces,” seeming to allude to Charles Lindbergh whose Nazi sympathies had become well known. Using his psychoanalytic toolkit, Adorno found that those who either maintained no gainful employment, or lent their productive capacities to occupations of little social value, represented the most violent and dangerous among the ranks of fascists. This observation handily reinforced the value of hard work and productivity by raising extreme fears about loafers, deadbeats, and boyish responsibility-shirkers who failed to settle down.

Other likely fascists included the promiscuous, “Impulsive” lesbian. Her overpowering “libidinous energy” placed her with the likes of drug addicts, prostitutes, and libertines who could be easily exploited by fascist leaders. Another undesirable who would fall prey to fascists, though would not likely emerge as one of the movement’s leaders, was the “Protesting” rabble-rouser who was likely a child of divorced parents. Also of some concern though still on the lower half of the scale was the “Rigid” type who objected to inequality based on considerations of the larger struggle between classes.⁶⁵ By positioning alternative values, lifestyles, ideals as susceptible to fascist exploitation, the authors made adherence to norms not only a personal benefit but a social necessity. It was the strongest inducement to conform yet offered by psychoanalysts in the 1950s. The fate of the free world might be determined, in part, because of the poor choices of

⁶⁵ Adorno, *Authoritarian Personality*, 771-781.

divorcees, the unemployed, adventurous playboys, and women who were promiscuous or homosexual.

Despite all the pressure on individuals to conform, psychoanalysts were in no way out of step with the other exceedingly popular intellectual vogue of the era—concern for the fate of the individual in American society. While promoting social norms and political ideals that by their very normalization demanded Americans conform, psychoanalysts also publicly promoted individualism. Such a paradox was consistent with the “elastic interpretive license” of psychoanalysis as well as evidence of the power of society to influence the discipline and its practitioners in different national contexts.

Fear of mass society was also based on memories of the ravages of totalitarianism—willingly adopted by half of Europe and the other half falling prey to it just a few years before. The individual, atomized by the anonymity of mass society and inundated with the messages of mass media, had recently shown how he or she could be absorbed into mass political parties and made not only to surrender his or her identity but his or her humanity as well.⁶⁶ Popularly elected and largely supported, the Nazi party had left millions dead in the killing fields, and perhaps even more gruesomely, disposed of millions more in industrial murder mills. The memories were fresh, and many had experienced first hand the horrors possible in mass society. Yet despite genuine concerns and thoughtful recommendations to preserve individuality and avoid mass society and totalitarianism, the programs of psychoanalysts could be strikingly conformist if not totalitarian themselves.

⁶⁶ Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1951), Part III.

The reputation of *The Authoritarian Personality* derives in large part from its context within an intellectual milieu that was fixated on preserving individuality. The text is reified as one of the premier intellectual works of the 1950s precisely for its lengthy, serious consideration of mass society and its risks to individuality. Its recommendations, however, can be somewhat startling considering this reputation. “Science,” and more specifically “psychological countermeasures,” according to the authors could “provide weapons against the potential threat of the fascist mentality.” Deploying psychological countermeasures would be difficult on a mass scale, but individuals could, through individual therapy, be more easily adjusted to more democratic, tolerant modes of thought.⁶⁷ No one would argue that discouraging fascism was an ignoble endeavor, but it is equally difficult to argue such psychological administration was wholly democratic or fostered genuine individuality. This program also reveals how conscious psychotherapists were of their power to influence individuals and instill values they deemed desirable.

The authors of *The Authoritarian Personality*, like other psychoanalytical experts, also hinted at plans beyond adjusting individuals on case by case basis and looked to create systems that could engender broader opposition to fascism. To prevent the spread and eradicate the inroads already made by cultural chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and fascism, the authors proposed focusing efforts on early childhood development. Adorno and his colleagues believed that parent-child relationships were the most formative for individuals’ personalities. In the case of a potential fascist, a “hierarchical, authoritarian, exploitive parent-child relationship [was] apt to carry over,” and lead to the development of an “Authoritarian” personality. The authors

⁶⁷ Adorno, *Authoritarian Personality*, 748-750.

suggested intervening in parent-child relationships and promoting the cultivation of cooperative and tolerant attitudes in both parents and children through public education. Even if the goals set and program to achieve them were determined by a round-table of eminent social scientists as suggested, the program would necessarily impose upon individuals certain ideals, values, and identities. Such a round-table may have resembled a shade of democracy and held humanitarian hopes, but it also would have included the imposition of values held by prominent social scientists. While objecting to the authoritarian personality's manipulation of individuals, the authors seemed to propose mass reeducation that while apparently informed by liberalism was by no means individualist.⁶⁸

Another popularly celebrated psychoanalyst of the era proposed still more drastic and contradictory programs to utilize the institutions of society to preserve individualism. As surprising as programs of mass re-education may seem when viewed in the texts of liberal intellectual heroes of the second half of the twentieth century, recommending eugenics as the ultimate solution to conformity seems even more outrageous. Neither rocket scientists nor psychological experts are needed to reason that isolating desirable traits and discarding others will only narrow genetic variations and the biological foundations for individuality. Surely any charlatan with the audacity to propose such autocratic means for supposedly democratic ends within ten years of the triumph over Nazism would have been ridiculed, censured, or at least ignored. Yet, Robert Lindner enjoyed great public esteem through the 1950s despite calls for

⁶⁸ Adorno, *Authoritarian Personality*, 971-976.

both mass re-education and selective breeding—in the name of individuality and personal freedom.⁶⁹

Acclaimed as the author of a book from which the popular movie *Rebel Without A Cause* took its name, Lindner was frequently featured in news articles on a variety of topics from child rearing to the threat of communist subversion.⁷⁰ He also published a number of books including a collection of short-stories which were dramatized and televised on multiple national networks.⁷¹ Within ten days of his death at the age of only 41, his friends including Norman Mailer, Max Lerner, Gerald Johnson, and Philip Wylie raised \$22,000 for a foundation in his name. It sponsored contests in music, art, literature, and science; one was held at the Maryland State Reformatory for Males with cash prizes of up to \$200 for first place in each category.⁷² That contest was a fitting tribute to Lindner, who worked in a federal penitentiary as a young officer in the U.S. Public Health Service and later wrote prolifically about the personal and social necessity of authentic self-expression and individual self worth. The benefactors of the foundation also testified to the intellectual and personal company he kept. Lindner was closely

⁶⁹ Robert Lindner, *Rebel Without A Cause* (New York: Grove Press, 1944).

⁷⁰ AP, “Robert Lindner, Psychologist, 41: Author of ‘Rebel Without a Cause,’ ‘Must You Conform?’ Dies,” *NYT*, Feb. 28, 1956, 31; AP, “Long Jail Term Defeats Justice,” *Cumberland Sunday Times* (Cumberland, MD), Apr. 2, 1950, 17; AP, “Haven for Neurotics, B-4; “Conformity and Delinquency,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 2, 1955, E-4.

⁷¹ Robert Lindner, *The Fifty-Minute Hour: A Collection of True Psychoanalytic Tales* (Rhinehart & Co., 1955); Richard F. Shepard, “N.B.C. To Televises Story By Lindner,” *NYT* Jan. 7, 1960, 59; Hedda Hopper, “Stanley Roberts to Screen Comedy on Psychiatry,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sep. 12, 1956, B6.

⁷² “Lindner Group Elects,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 9, 1956, 49; “Horace,” *Morning Herald* (Hagerstown, MD), Feb. 17, 1958, 2.

connected to and admired by some of the decade's most influential writers, journalists, and opinion-makers.⁷³

Like other intellectuals of the era, the threat of conformity in American society concerned Lindner—even more than communism or deviation from social norms. At the same time, his work had helped reinforce social and political norms by promoting industriousness, marriage, heterosexuality, and the contradictions in communist ideology. He even advertised his ability to cure homosexuality. His published work overall and the publicity he received, however, dealt most with threats to individuality.⁷⁴ Demonstrating the scope of the problem in Lindner's eyes, he claimed that conformity, or adjustment to social norms and political ideals, was promulgated in America

by politicians to propagandize for power, to enslave peoples in error...by the military to create mindlessness to regiment and paralyze individuality, to awaken atavistic appetites for hate and slaughter...by business to nourish greed and to tempt with trifles...to drain creative energies, and to promote mechanized efficiency...by the clergy to engender submission to instill fear...by parents to subdue and to dominate.⁷⁵

“The most influential,” of those reinforcing conformity he warned “have been, and are, the psychologists, the physicians of the ‘soul.’” They, like the other powerful forces above, sought nothing less than the “domestication of the human animal.” According to Lindner, *all* social institutions and social groups, especially the mental health sciences, by their very nature demanded that individuals conform. It was their *raison d’etre*. Despite this, he proposed

⁷³ “‘Different’ Child Held No Liability: Parents Urged to Rejoice In Special Gifts Rather Than Strive for Conformity,” *NYT*, Oct. 15, 1953, 44; Marcia Winn, “Cites Peril in Forcing Children to Conform,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 17, 1955, A-5; Faith Corrigan, “Social Drive to Conform Called Peril,” *NYT*, Apr. 25, 1955, 26; “Conformity and Delinquency,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 2, 1955, E-4.

⁷⁴ See notes 48-52.

⁷⁵ Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion*, 298.

solutions that utilized the institutions of society, including his own discipline—psychoanalysis—to maximize individuality.⁷⁶ “A prime condition for a better world and a first step toward the production of individuals who will aid rather than impede social progress,” Lindner reasoned, was to perform “mental and physical examinations to discourage marriage (and someday perhaps even mating) between those who are likely to breed and rear the unfit.” Psychologists and other mental health professionals, backed by their established expertise and singular qualification to determine one’s psychological fitness, would decide who was fit for reproduction and, thus, who had the right to propagate future generations.

“Uncontrolled breeding” of individuals “incapable of contributing to the public weal” who drained the resources of the community, state, and federal government could, through the expertise of physicians and eugenicists, be eliminated. Whole social groups, particularly those that relied on public assistance, would be gradually eliminated through selective breeding to ensure a society that had a greater proportion of self-reliant individuals. Those who fell short of expectations for industriousness and a strong work ethic would not just be encouraged to work harder or put to work in digging out dandelions at Menninger’s Topeka Clinic, they would, in Lindner’s program, slowly be eliminated from the gene pool.⁷⁷

Like the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality*, Lindner also suggested education and instruction of parents in child rearing could instill key values that would protect and promote individualism. These values included awareness of one’s self and of others, a strong sense of personal identity, skepticism, responsibility for one’s own actions, continual employment in self-

⁷⁶ Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion*, 13-14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 251-253.

improvement, and non-complacency. Through the most effective psychotherapeutic practices, “careful and proper re-education” of the masses could ensure greater individualism. Lindner, however, went beyond even that. To “annihilate [Mass Man] now and to stamp out his seed,” Lindner thought, the media could “propagandize the prescription” dictated by psychotherapists. These prescriptions would result in a new mass of individuals sharing a common vision and values—liberal individualism.⁷⁸

Having dedicated the previous two hundred pages to decrying the ignominy of social institutions, of which psychology was the worst, Lindner explicitly proposed the same kind of social indoctrination and psychological manipulation of particular values and ideals that other psychoanalysts had advanced more subtly in other outlets. Lindner also startlingly admitted the power of psychotherapy to establish norms, and thus, the boundaries of acceptable behavior, identity, and values. The key difference was that he proposed even more extreme measures to readjust all of society to values and desired attributes he desired. Lindner’s fantasies represented only the most paradoxical and extravagant exhortations of the power of psychotherapy to adjust individuals to certain social expectations of behavior in the 1950s. Much of what Lindner proposed openly, save perhaps for selective breeding, was precisely what psychoanalysts across the decade had promoted—adherence to a particular set of social values and political ideals.

The rise of psychoanalysis began much like the nation’s return to prosperity during World War II. The war first brought psychoanalysis from a curious academic pursuit to a legitimized, practically-useful scientific discipline. After having established both its credentials and public

⁷⁸ Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion*, 253-277.

utility through the positive publicity media outlets gave the discipline during the war, psychoanalysts continued to expand the discipline's popularity and influence by promoting resonant social values and political ideals with continued exposure in print media. Though the discipline once promised individual liberation and personal fulfillment, psychoanalysts tied certain values, moralities, ideals, and identities to good mental health, thereby normalizing these and narrowing the available options for individual Americans. Expert, scientific prescriptions for happiness and good mental health constituted one of the strongest inducements for individuals in the 1950s to conform to social and political norms.

The work of psychoanalysts in shaping social norms and political ideals among individuals should not be considered nefarious, conspiratorial, or simply maleficent social control. There is no evidence of a worldwide consortium of psychoanalysts meeting in smoke-filled rooms to plan the elimination of unpredictable individual personalities. Psychoanalysts may have, in many ways, manipulated both individuals and society more generally, but they likely believed they did so in an effort to help individuals achieve happier, more fulfilling lives. The values, moralities, and identities of which they spoke were also popular and seemingly attractive at the time. For a generation that had lived through or been reared by parents who vividly recalled the denial of consumer comforts, the breakdown of family, and erosion of traditional gender roles during the Great Depression, psychoanalysts helped advocate and normalize a happy American life that was, as an added bonus, now more readily achievable *and* a bulwark against insanity.

Media was crucial to raising the public prestige of psychoanalysis and bolstering the social values and political ideals they fostered. By lending their professional expertise to the

promotion of popular social and political norms, psychoanalysts both reinforced these norms and advanced the standing of their profession. In the therapy room, in the newspaper, and in professional academic settings, psychoanalysts encouraged American men to work hard to provide for their beautiful wives and darling children. Therapists assured American society that wives need not feel like domestic chores were tedious or a regression from the significant contributions women had made during wartime production. Instead women could again find a rewarding identity as a loving mother and tender wife. Intimate relationships among the limited members of the new nuclear family ensured stronger emotional ties between spouses and promised healthy adolescent development. Freed from contributing to the family income, children could also be directed more toward educational enrichment. Men fulfilled expectations for masculinity and enjoyed monuments to their hard work and love of family.

Deviations from these values like promiscuity, homosexuality, or boyish cavalier-ism as well as threats to this new, realizable American dream such as communism, fascism, or any other form of totalitarianism were, of course, to be feared, not simply from a distant national perspective but in very personal terms as well. Inappropriate behavior might not only aid and abet the national and ideological enemies of the United States, it also risked the personal hell of mental illness. Psychoanalysts assured Americans the new nuclear family could take refuge from the evils of the modern world in their single-family homes, away from possibly deviant strangers. Americans should also feel assured that their new lives were normal, healthy, and even better, the fulfillment of the American dream. Americans need not feel guilty, selfish, or concerned with enjoying the material and emotional comforts of their own private utopias. They

should celebrate and encourage others to to strive for the same. And America, moreover, appeared to listen. These were, after all, doctor's orders.

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