CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Rise of Modernization Theory

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Modernizing the Middle East. — Subtitle of Daniel Lerner's 1958 book,
The Passing of Traditional Society

Modernizing the Mideast. — Headline for a December 13, 2002, news story
on CBSNews.com reporting the George W. Bush
administration's plans for Iraq and beyond

THESE EPIGRAPHS highlight the persistence of an idea in the American imagination. The idea is that the Middle East—and, by extension, much of the postcolonial world after the end of the Second World War—was and remains a relatively backward place populated by people mired in "traditional" practices and values. Their only hope is to be modernized by an injection of Western values and expertise. Postwar modernization theory posited a model of societal transformation made possible by embracing Western manufacturing technology, political structures, values, and systems of mass communication. As a policy initiative, modernization was the centerpiece of Cold War efforts to thwart the spread of Soviet Communism in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. A package of Western industrial organization, patterns of governance, and general lifestyles was conceived and offered up as an irresistible and obviously superior path to entering the modern postwar world.

Daniel Lerner's 1958 book, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East,* was among the first book-length publications to set out a psychosocial theory of modernization.[1] The book was based on research that the U.S. State Department funded in the late 1940s. The original purpose of the research was to determine whether people in the Middle East

were listening to Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts and, if so, to ascertain their reactions to the programming. In the mid-1950s, Lerner reanalyzed the data in light of a new conceptualization revolving around the notion that Western values and ideas disseminated by Western mass media could help transform countries of the Middle East from traditional and primitive nations into countries with modern forms of social, economic, and political organization.[2]

The first epigraph at the head of this chapter obviously refers to the subtitle of Lerner's book, in which he introduced readers to the Chief of Balgat, a man steeped in traditional values that were depicted as antiquated and out of step with the modern world. Lerner presented the Chief as hopelessly parochial, judging all issues and events from the perspective of his "traditional virtues" and possessing quaint wisdom about "wives and cows." The Chief had no desire to leave his village and only wanted his sons to be good soldiers and his daughters to marry well. The Chief had the only radio in the village, and he carefully monitored and controlled the use of this "Devil's Box." Although he invited village elites to his home to listen to the news from Ankara, he alone interpreted its meaning and significance for the gathered crowd.[3]

Against this setting, Lerner discussed in broad strokes his idea of traditional-to-modern social change catalyzed by mass media. The logic underlying the transformation comprised the following arguments: "No modern society functions efficiently without a developed system of mass media"; mass media "open to the large masses of mankind the infinite *vicarious* universe" of modern ideas and experiences; media exposure produces "desire . . . to live in the world 'lived' only vicariously"; when many people experience this desire, "a transition is under way" toward modernization. And because "what the West is, the Middle East seeks to become," "Islam is absolutely defenseless" against "a rationalist and positivist spirit" embodied in Western-style democratic institutions.[4]

In the second epigraph, a headline from a CBSNews.com posting mirrors the subtitle of Lerner's book. The accompanying news story described the George W. Bush administration's efforts to emphasize "political, economic, and educational reform throughout the Arab world." With sentiment reflecting Lerner's, the news item claimed Arab leaders cared little about modern ideas, such as improving the lives of girls and women, instituting literacy training, and connecting schools to new media, such as the Internet. The story also said that democracy and transparency were "not normally associated with governments in the Arab Middle East. One small but telling example of the region's reluctance to open itself up to the outside world: the Arab world, on an annual basis, translates only 330 books into Arabic." The subtext of this report seems clear: Modern views and

orientations, such as respect for women, education, and modern technology, were the "natural" purview of the West, while people in the Middle East stubbornly resisted altruistic efforts to bring them into a more modern age. In this 2002 news story, the Middle East was somehow broken—a place, according to then–Secretary of State Colin Powell (quoted in the CBSNews.com story), "resistant to reform," "left behind" by the "recent spread of democracy and free markets," where terrorists were "born and radicalized": a place of "despair" that could be fixed only by "strengthening civil society."[5]

I N THE MID–TWENTIETH CENTURY, with the Cold War in full swing, American officials were engaged in a strategic battle with the Soviet Union to bring newly independent states in geopolitically sensitive regions of the world into their respective spheres of influence. Spurred by massive funding from the government, Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, Harold Lasswell, Lerner, and other leading scholars were part of a network of intellectuals putting their analytical and theoretical skills to work, thinking carefully about geopolitical strategy and ways of winning the hearts and minds of residents in the postcolonial world, then known commonly as "underdeveloped countries," "less-developed countries," or the "third world." Many of these ideas and techniques were central to modernization theory.

In *Passing of Traditional Society,* Lerner explained how nations became "modern," a term that for Lerner and other modernization theorists meant "Western." The book was a study based on roughly three hundred surveys conducted in each of six countries—Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria—in 1950 and 1951. Respondents answered 117 questions about their living conditions, their opinions on politics and foreign countries, their use of mass media, their level of happiness, and their basic demographic characteristics. Based on a final total of about 1,600 respondents across all countries, Lerner statistically extracted three types or categories of people and nations—the traditional, the transitional, and the modern.[6]

Drawing from the history of Europe and North America, Lerner said modernization began when a nation's rural population started moving from the countryside to cities ("from farms to flats, from fields to factories"[7]). Growing population density brought about by urbanization then led to demand for schools, mass media, markets for free trade, and other modern and democratically organized institutions. Finally, as literacy and media consumption grew, so did the general levels of economic participation (in the form of higher levels of material consumption) and political participation (in the form of voting in free elections). For Lerner, the ability to buy things and vote were among the clearest indicators of a modern nation.

This outcome was the normative touchstone of neoclassical economic theories that proposed macroeconomic planning to stimulate Gross National Product and free market forces as the best way to efficiently allocate resources.[8] Thus, as a theory of nation building, Lerner emphasized these ideas and values as the best path for those newly emerging states in the postcolonial world that wanted to enter the modern postwar world. Mass media were assigned the key task of making this modernization model attractive and irresistible. Lerner assumed that exposure to media messages and images from the West would help people in the postcolonial world replace old traditional ways of thinking and doing with modern ways of thinking and doing. Lerner considered mass media to be a multiplier and enhancer of the modernization process. The driving cognitive mechanism for this process was "empathy" or "psychic mobility," the ability and desire to project oneself into unfamiliar situations and places—such as the modern world that the West represented—and the aspiration to experience those conditions. According to Lerner, the survey data demonstrated that modern societies had higher proportions of empathetic people than transitional societies, and transitional ones more than traditional societies.[9]

Lerner's modernization theory was clear in its position that any nation could be modern. No nation was destined to be traditional and backward. To be modern, a nation's citizens had only to emulate the actions and ideas of people in the Western nations that had earlier moved away from tradition-bound backwardness and into the modern world. Western experts, such as Lerner, could provide the knowledge and illuminate the path toward modernity. People (and nations) unwilling or unable to accept Western tutelage and adapt to the "new ways" of the modern West were not deemed *naturally* or *genetically* incapable of change but thought to be hobbled by backwardness characterized by traditional *cultural* practices or, as Everett M. Rogers later put it, a "subculture of peasantry."[10] This perspective was a break from the earlier period of colonialism in which many Europeans viewed colonized populations as racially—that is, biologically—inferior to white people. In the wake of a world war in which Allied forces defeated an enemy whose philosophy hinged on exterminating peoples deemed to be genetically inferior, modernization theory embraced explanations of human difference rooted in ideas of mutable cultural characteristics rather than immutable racial ones.

Lerner was praised for writing a book that expertly combined a general theory of change with empirical specificity. Some of the praise was quite effusive: *Passing of Traditional Society* "is bound to retain an honored place" in the literature on the Middle East, wrote Emil Lengyel;[11] the book "will have an impact on all meaningful studies of the Middle East and other

modernizing cultures as well," noted Morroe Berger;[12] and John Badeau said, "Here is a solid piece of social research that is indispensable in judging the rapid social changes that increasingly engulf Middle East society."[13] In a memorial written shortly after Lerner's death, political scientist Myron Weiner wrote that *Passing of Traditional Society* "was well received, widely read, frequently cited, and had considerable influence on subsequent studies."[14] In 2004, Marsha Pripstein Posusney noted that Lerner's book remains "the seminal work" in the area, and as recently as 2008, Mark Levy and Indrajit Banerjee called *Passing of Traditional Society* the "locus classicus" in the area of mass media and modernization studies.[15]

However, reviews of *Passing of Traditional Society* were not uniformly positive. P. M. Mahar noted that the "frail theory" of modernization only seemed to explain the Turkey case with any accuracy, while Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iran were not at all well explained.[16] Elie Salem faulted the book for "generalizing on the basis of meager particulars."[17] And John Gulick said Lerner's generalizing from the individual empathic personality type to a societal typology (that is, the traditional, transitional, modern scheme) was "a startling procedure when one considers that specialists armed with full personality data are hesitant to make such a generalization in cases of cultures less complex than the Middle East."[18]

These early critiques of Lerner's book were harbingers of a relatively steady stream of criticism that was aimed not always specifically at Lerner and *Passing of Traditional Society* but also more generally at the premises, assumptions, and predictions of modernization theory. Much of the criticism came from left-leaning scholars who saw a neocolonial imprint on modernization theory, but conservative thinkers, such as Edward Banfield and Samuel Huntington, also were critical. Banfield declared that democracy and the freedoms that went with it were too foreign to the experience of the "backward peoples" of the postcolonial world, and, therefore, Western efforts to modernize the Middle East or other poor areas were likely to fail. Some societies, said Banfield, were fated to remain backward: "The American Indian, for example, has had extensive aid for decades, but he is still in most cases very far from belonging to the modern world." Huntington thought that rather than establishing political stability, modernization could just as easily create instability in the postcolonial world, which was not in the interest of the United States. Rather than promoting modernization, Huntington argued, the United States ought to be *preventing* modernization.[19]

Perhaps the sharpest criticisms came from scholars in the postcolonial world. For example, in a blunt but representative critique of the assumptions of modernization, Pakistani economist Inayatullah said at a conference that Lerner cohosted:

> [Modernization] presupposes that because the "traditional" socie-
> ties have not risen to the higher level of technological development
> in comparison to the Western society, they are sterile, unproduc-
> tive, uncreative, and hence worth liquidating. It measures the cre-
> ativity of the traditional world with a few limited standards, such as
> urbanization and industrialization, like the person who measures
> the competence of everybody on terms of his own special compe-
> tence. . . . It shows remarkable ethnocentrism by equating modern
> society with paradise and fails to take into account [its own] crisis,
> especially in the realm of personality . . . which Erich Fromm and
> other psychologists have aptly located.[20]

Striking a similar note, Kenyan political scientist and philosopher Ali Maz-
rui criticized modernization for its paternalism, noting that the theory gives
postcolonial peoples "a capacity to emulate without permitting [them] a
capacity to create."[21] In a more recent historical analysis, Ashis Nandy
challenged the assumption that Western science and technology inevitably
benefited those who participated in modernization. Rather than accept the
idea that science was always liberating, Nandy read the history of modern-
ization science in India as violent and oppressive. He argued that an image
of modernization as scientific advance was frequently used to justify
exploitation of minorities, the poor, and others with relatively little power.
He wrote, "Science, as a *raison d'état,* can inflict violence in the name of
national security or development."[22] For modernization theorists, science
represented a value-neutral and practical application of technical knowl-
edge to increase productivity and efficiency that could help transform tra-
dition societies into modern ones.[23] Thus, modernization could ignore,
manipulate, or even eliminate the very people it was intended to benefit in
the name of science-based progress.

Despite the criticisms and subsequent indications that modernization
theory neither explained nor predicted the societal transformations of the
postcolonial world particularly well, Lerner's ideas continue to influence to
some extent the academic study of mass media and modernization. For
example, Lerner's conception of the role of "mass media in modernization"
is an antecedent of "development communication," the latter label having
largely replaced the former by the 1970s.[24] Development communication
has attained the status of a bona fide specialization within the field of com-
munication studies, as evidenced by the publication of the *Journal of Devel-
opment Communication* beginning in 1990. Development communication
refers to the delivery of messages intended to inculcate promodernization
values, often via the technologies of mass communication. The messages
travel top-down (e.g., West to non-West, elite to nonelite, expert to non-

expert, capital city to outlying areas) with the intent of creating a climate favorable to the reception of exogenous ideas. This approach also reflected the diffusion of innovations idea, which Rogers popularized in communication studies in the early 1960s.[25] In a sense, the diffusion of innovations was an operational model for one aspect of Lerner's theory—the exposure to new ideas leading to desire for new experiences—and one might argue that it has become the de facto research design for the study of development communication. For example, studies of mass media campaigns for raising awareness and adopting behavioral change among target audiences within specific issue areas[26] are classified as development communication. In the 1980s and 1990s, new emphases, initiatives, and theoretical approaches to development emerged, mainly rooted in concepts of participation and empowerment of people previously conceived as "targets." These new ideas came under the heading "development-support communication," a term intended to signal the use of horizontally networked information flow (as opposed to top-down models) not simply as an input into modernization but as a way of supporting people's aspiration for control over their resources and basic needs.[27] Srinivas Melkote and H. Leslie Steeves claimed, however, that development-support communication, in practice, was not much different from development communication,[28] and Hemant Shah noted that development-support communication, although it was not top-down, was frequently "outside-in," meaning that Western experts with particular values and institutional biases were still highly influential.[29] In any case, some reviews have shown that in development communication and development-support communication, certain elements of Lerner's model remained touchstones, albeit less and less frequently as time passed, for scholars, policy makers, and practitioners alike.[30]

Despite the historical importance of *Passing of Traditional Society,* no one has thoroughly explored the genesis of Lerner's modernization theory. Even though many critiqued the book's approach and assumptions, the scholars and practitioners in the field of development communication have not undertaken a thorough examination of the book to fully understand the intellectual origins of Lerner's work. For example, Melkote and Steeves's *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice for Empowerment,* which rightly is considered the key overview textbook on the subject, devotes about a dozen pages to Lerner.[31] Sujatha Sosale's *Communication, Development and Democracy: Mapping a Discourse,* on the discursive construction of the idea of development, refers to Lerner on only a handful of pages.[32] Christopher Simpson's *Science of Coercion: Communication Research and Psychological Warfare 1945–1960* touches on Lerner's location in a network of intellectuals who moved from military intelligence work to communication research but does not discuss Lerner's centrality

to development communication.[33] Similarly, Timothy Glander's *Origins of Mass Communications Research during the American Cold War: Educational Effects and Contemporary Implications* acknowledges Lerner's position in postwar communication research but makes no mention of his importance to the field of development communication.[34] Another handful of book chapters and journal articles on Lerner's work discuss his military propaganda background,[35] the ethnocentric biases in *Passing of Traditional Society*,[36] and the parallels between modernization theory and sociological theories of immigrant assimilation.[37] This book explicates how *Passing of Traditional Society* came together—historically, intellectually, geopolitically, culturally—and then considers the extent to which Lerner's ideas influenced development communication as an academic field.

Why and in what ways is Lerner's theory considered viable even though it has turned out to be an overly optimistic model of how people's lives in poor nations might improve by adopting psychosocial practices and institutional forms that were taken as the basis for modernity in the West? The emphasis on mass media might account for part of the attraction. With each innovation in communication technology after radio—television, communication satellites, microwave telephony, Internet, social media, and so forth—scholars of development communication, excited by the promise of a new technical solution for the problems that poor societies face, embrace anew the potential power of mass-mediated content to stimulate the traditional-to-modern transformation. In addition, Lerner's insistent claim for the universality of his modernization model also may account for its popularity. Because the model was unconstrained by time or space, it provided a convenient way for development communication researchers to theoretically frame their empirical studies no matter where or when they were conducted. In any case, an attempt to answer questions about the extent to which Lerner's modernization theory remains persuasive should begin by thinking about the intellectual roots of his ideas. Specifically, we need an examination of how and why Lerner melded ideas about social change, cognitive processes, media messages, and geopolitics into a theory of societal transformation for the postcolonial world.

This book follows Lerner's career to investigate the ideas and influences to which he was exposed and how these influenced his thinking about modernization and the conception and writing of *Passing of Traditional Society*. To understand his theoretical and methodological approach, this book traces Lerner's professional and intellectual trajectory as a military intelligence officer in World War II and then as a social scientist in the postwar American academy. This book explores how Lerner's institutional appointments, intellectual networks, and scholarly output reveal the way he thought about the modernization of postcolonial nations. It is also

important, however, to consider three dimensions of the postwar socio-historical context in which Lerner and his colleagues were working: the new geopolitical equation, the rise of behavioral social sciences, and the growing influence of racial liberalism. Lerner's professional path led straight through the often-turbulent debates surrounding these three interrelated issues, and this turmoil also inevitably affected and even shaped his thinking.

DANIEL LERNER AND THE PRODUCTION OF
PASSING OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

Passing of Traditional Society was a "production" in the sense that it was an outcome of a research process embedded in a particular postwar political and cultural economy. The specific methods, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical linkages described in the book, as well as the specific policy implications thereof, were possible—imaginable—only at *that* particular historical moment. However, the general idea that the West is superior to the "rest" can be traced much further back in history than 1958. The perspective that people outside the Euro-American fold are inferior goes back at least to the fifteenth-century "voyages of discovery" by the sailing fleets from Portugal, Spain, and England.[38] A discourse that counterposed the superiority of Europeans and the inferiority of non-Europeans emerged during this time and justified conquest, plunder, and murder of peoples throughout Africa, Asia, and the "new world" of the Americas. This discourse, which Edward Said labeled "Orientalism," persists to this day in many ways and continues to be employed to justify newer—and older—forms of Western colonialism and imperialism.[39]

During the Second World War, academics from a variety of disciplines served in various offices of the U.S. government and military.[40] They deployed their skills to address the problems associated with winning a war. They also formed social networks based on their shared intellectual interests. These networks transferred quite easily into civilian life after the war, when the academics went back to their positions as professors and administrators at leading American universities. Some of these academics became heavily involved in discussions about crafting postwar foreign policy. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a handful of these academics was central to the first articulations of a nascent modernization theory, which helped American leaders legitimize Cold War policies to compete geopolitically in strategic locations, such as the Middle East. The intellectual network for modernization thinking was interdisciplinary, spanning such fields as sociology, political science, economics, psychology, anthropology, ethnic and racial studies, and mass communication. As modernization emerged as a theoretical construct from discussions in conferences, seminars, and consultancies,

a scholarly consensus emerged over a relatively short period of time as to the meaning and relevance of the idea. The production of *Passing of Traditional Society* played a significant part in the formation of this consensus.

Lerner's book was a production in a second sense, also. As mentioned earlier, the book was the outcome of a number of intellectual influences and personal experiences that shaped Lerner as he progressed through his professional life. He learned statistical methods, he appreciated comparative cross-national approaches, he embraced the social sciences, he identified Lasswell and Parsons as his "theoretical heroes," and he even found his gift for languages and literary analysis useful as he moved toward the opportunity that resulted in the writing of *Passing of Traditional Society*. The book was a product, in other words, of a personal assemblage of specific research skills, disciplinary dogma, a system of values, and a vision of America's superiority and liberal altruism.

THE POSTWAR CONTEXT

In the years immediately following the war, social scientists experienced an identity crisis of sorts and were struggling to carve out a niche within the academy. Many scholars had served in the war effort, and now they sought their next mission. There was no unanimity, but most social scientists wanted to participate in the struggle against Communism; come to grips with cultural questions, such as race relations in America; and, perhaps most of all, legitimize the social sciences vis-à-vis the natural sciences. These three factors were among the important contextual issues with which Lerner's career trajectory interacted as he moved from one institutional setting to another, accumulating the knowledge and technique that would lead to the writing of *Passing of Traditional Society*. Of course, entire books have been dedicated to each of the three contextual areas mentioned, and here the historical ground cannot be covered in its entirety. But because these factors are vital for understanding the way in which Lerner crafted his modernization theory, a brief review of the geopolitical, intellectual, and cultural climate at the midpoint of the twentieth century is essential.[41]

Geopolitics

At the end of World War II, there was wide agreement in Washington that Soviet Communism needed to be contained. Regarding the postcolonial world, the dominant thinking in U.S. policy-making circles was that the so-called new nations emerging from colonized status were vulnerable to Soviet influence, political instability, and anti-American revolutions.[42] As India, Indonesia, Ghana, and several other states began to declare their

independence beginning in the late 1940s, American policy makers realized that they could not automatically count on these new nations to be allies of the West. David Ekbladh recounted Jawaharlal Nehru's comments on this matter during the Indian prime minister's visit to the United States in 1949. The Soviet models of economic progress and development held as much allure for the newly independent states as the American models. Nehru said, in essence, that the side that best helped the less-powerful nations would win the superpower struggle.[43]

Of course, postwar anxieties about the Soviets were not linked to decolonization alone. President Harry S. Truman had always been rather suspicious of Joseph Stalin's motives and frustrated with his negotiating tactics after the war. Truman's views were further shaped by the "Long Telegram," sent in February 1946 by George Kennan, who had been stationed in Moscow since 1944. The wire was a detailed analysis of Soviet ideology, psychology, and desires as well as their strategy, tactics, and policy. Kennan wrote that Russians were inherently insecure and paranoid, and the Soviet Union was committed to undermining the peace and harmony of the United States. Kennan said that the Soviets were intent on expanding their global influence and that they did not consider peaceful coexistence with Americans a realistic possibility. He said the Soviets were impervious to the "logic of reason but sensitive to the logic of force," and they would back down in the face of superior strength.[44]

The Long Telegram became a foundation for American foreign policy to "restrain and confine Soviet influence."[45] This strategy paved the way in March 1947 for the articulation of the Truman Doctrine. In response to political crises in Greece and Turkey that made the countries vulnerable to Soviet pressure, Truman said the United States must provide "economic and financial aid, which is essential to economic stability and democratic practices, [to] support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities."[46] Subsequently, the Marshall Plan seemed a logical second step in containing Soviet influence in Europe, where nations were in desperate shape at the end of the war—"a rubble heap, a charnel house, a breeding ground of pestilence and hate," Winston Churchill famously said.[47] Secretary of State George Marshall announced the initiative in a speech at Harvard in June 1947. "Our policy," he said, "is not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, and desperation and chaos." But, he continued, "governments, political parties, or groups which seek to perpetuate human misery in order to profit there politically or otherwise will encounter the opposition of the United States."[48] Marshall was not only laying out the outlines of a U.S. aid program for Europe but also drawing a line in the sand, in an unmistakable reference to the Soviet Union, for governments that obstructed U.S. plans

or "perpetuate[d] human misery" in Europe. Thus, the Marshall Plan not only helped rebuild European countries and create a counterbalance to Soviet power; it provided a moral rationale for intervention. Congress approved $17 billion for the European Recovery Program (the official name of the Marshall Plan) in April 1948.

Against this background of nation building as containment strategy, Truman's presidential inauguration speech in January 1949 was a key moment for postwar modernization theory. In this speech, Truman announced "Point Four," which articulated his administration's intent to expand Marshall Plan–like aid and assistance to what he called the underdeveloped world. Truman said:

> Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.

Point Four established the concept of underdevelopment to describe what had been called the "backwardness" of colonized lands and demonstrated in a dramatic way the power of postwar America to define the status of other nations in a bipolar world. The Point Four idea that development could be strategically planned and stimulated from the outside was notable in its shift away from an earlier idea of intransitive social change in which social progress occurred spontaneously.[49] Point Four rhetoric also eliminated the colonizer-colonized dynamic by erasing questions about unequal power among nations, which was the central cause of underdevelopment, according to critical historical analyses.[50] In the rubric that Point Four established, underdevelopment was just one stage in an inevitable, linear process toward development. Creating an underdevelopment-development continuum to essentially replace the colonizer-colonized dichotomy allowed Truman and American foreign policy makers to present intervention as a humanitarian mission rather than a new form of colonialism.[51] Truman said in the speech that the "United States is preeminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques [and] we should make available to peace-loving peoples our store of technical know-how in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans."[52] Lerner apparently took Truman's message to heart and barely mentioned the consequences of imperialism and colonialism for the Middle East in *Passing of Traditional Society* or much of his subsequent work, focusing instead on the more neutral-sounding process of modernization.

Truman's speech provided a clear link between the general fear of Soviet power and a specific concern that instability in postcolonial regions made

them vulnerable to Communist influence. It was almost the same argument that the earlier Truman Doctrine made: U.S. assistance needed to go to the unstable nations of Greece and Turkey so they would not fall into the Soviet sphere of influence.[53] One significant difference between the Truman Doctrine and Point Four was that the latter mobilized the American academy in the service of the Cold War. Truman's inaugural address provided a foreign policy framework within which social scientists and other intellectuals would pursue research on nation building, social change, and models of international aid. Ultimately, the articulation and application of modernization theory, as Michael Latham has written,[54] provided a set of core ideas around which social scientists examined emerging nations and produced knowledge that served as continuing input for policy deliberations in Washington. In turn, governmental agencies as well as private organizations, such as the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation, provided funding for social science research on the postcolonial world.

Passing of Traditional Society was positioned as rigorous and objective social science scholarship, but partisan geopolitical concerns were at its core. The survey data on which the book was based were collected under the auspices of VOA, the international broadcasting arm of the State Department. As Rohan Samarajiwa has shown, the original intent of the VOA study was to assess the radio-listening habits of people in the Middle East so the State Department could formulate policies to more effectively counter Radio Moscow broadcasting to the region.[55] The central goal of the VOA research, which was contracted out in 1949 to Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) under the direction of sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, was to "gain insights into the comparative effectiveness of the propaganda struggle between East and West [through] comparisons of reliability and popularity of VOA, BBC, USSR."[56] The VOA questionnaire asked respondents to indicate whether they listened to and retained information from various international broadcasters. It was much later, after he completed his part of the VOA propaganda study in the summer of 1951, that Lerner crafted his ostensibly value-free framework within which to launch a cross-national comparative study of mass media and modernization.

The Social Sciences

From around the 1880s through the interwar years (1919–1938), the social sciences struggled with their intellectual identity and for standing alongside the natural and physical sciences. Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske have noted that at the turn of the twentieth century, many of the most talented and ambitious American scholars went to Europe for advanced

training, and David Paul Haney has shown that no coherent intellectual framework guided the work of the earliest American social scientists.[57] They also suffered from an unflattering public image, in which they were viewed as a "conglomeration of uplifters, do-gooders, evangelists, and crackpots."[58] During the interwar years, the social sciences were viewed in the academy as the weaker siblings to the natural and physical sciences. Despite the fact that important social scientists supported value-free research and "objectivism" and called for rigorous experimentation and quantification,[59] sociology, anthropology, and the new field of mass communication, for example, were considered soft sciences. These fields of study were based on speculations, anecdotes, and cultural interpretation, the argument went, not on rigorous measurement and precise prediction. Natural and physical scientists looked down on social scientists as "pseudo-scientist[s] at best and as crackpot radical[s] at worst."[60] Undeterred, social scientists forged ahead, trying to emulate the quantitative methods and the position of detachment purportedly practiced in the natural and physical sciences.

In the years immediately following World War II, many social scientists shared the sense that the postwar era was going to make great demands on their experience, expertise, and skills. After all, the leaders in the field had helped achieve practical wartime applications of their theoretical knowledge and had helped develop or perfect several social science research techniques and statistical procedures. And now, many were ready to take on the projects required in the fight against Communism.[61] They also still hoped that they could join the "true" sciences, simultaneously advancing knowledge about social life and addressing practical social problems.[62]

One important origin of the dominant postwar empirical approach to scholarly work in the social sciences can be traced to University of Chicago political scientist Charles Merriam and his advocacy of behavioralism, a systematic, quantitative, and ostensibly value-free approach to discovering general laws of social and political behavior.[63] Harold Lasswell, Merriam's star pupil, carried the behavioralism torch forward,[64] influencing many others, such as his students Gabriel Almond and Lucian Pye and his close friend Lerner.[65] In the context of modernization theory, constructs such as "traditional society" or "new nations" helped social scientists think of the postcolonial world as a unitary category in which a wide range of places with diverse histories could be placed. Based on this broad conceptualization, variables were isolated, measured, and studied in the halls of the academy as well as in the homes, institutions, and villages of the postcolonial world to discover generalizable patterns. Intellectually, this was a typical behavioral approach—the search for general laws of societal transformation through the use of quantitative social science methods. Merriam's behavioralism was not without its critics, however, who ridiculed its claims of objec-

tivity, its emphasis on seeking universality in something as idiosyncratic as human will, and the creation of specialized technical jargon. Alvin Gouldner went so far as to suggest that behavioralism was, in fact, insidiously masking ideology rather than being free of value.[66] Although most political scientists continued to use the term "behavioralism" to describe their work, other social scientists used "behavioral science," especially after the Ford Foundation used the term to label a new funding stream in 1951.[67]

Among the most famous and visible of the scholars pushing for behavioral science was Harvard University sociologist Talcott Parsons, who said sociology should be dedicated to the advancement and transmission of knowledge derived through systematically and rigorously conducted empirical research.[68] Implicitly, at least, this position was also a dismissive shrug about the sociology conducted and taught in the early 1900s and through the interwar years at University of Chicago under Albion Small, W. I. Thomas, and Robert Park, who were all associated, rightly or wrongly, with the "do-gooder, uplifter, and crackpot" brand of research. Parsons believed the social sciences should be practiced in a way that would put them on par with the natural and physical sciences. There was no reason, Parsons said, that human intelligence could not solve social problems as well as those of atomic physics.[69]

Parsons's enthusiasm for a "science" of social studies was buttressed by a sense that ideology was responsible for the horrors of the two world wars—that destitution, despair, poverty, and even genocide were the result of battles over mere ideas rather than careful consideration of concrete issues. The clear implication was that only science was real, and devotion to its practice could have prevented war. A struggle over ideology was a waste of effort, time, and, ultimately, lives. By midcentury, the quest for "certain knowledge" via scientific methods was viewed as an antidote to ideology, which was disdained as the epistemological mode of Communism.[70] These trends had clear intellectual consequences. By 1950, with McCarthyism snaking its way into the academy, scholars made themselves and their work less vulnerable to attack by replacing Karl Marx with Sigmund Freud, critiquing Communism instead of capitalism, analyzing social stratification instead of class conflict, and studying the economics of growth and consumption rather than reform and redistribution.[71]

By the end of World War II, Parsons and other academics had begun efforts to legitimize the study of social process and problems by couching it as a behavioral *science*. But this effort was not organized explicitly. Haney wrote that many prominent sociologists at the leading sociology departments seemed to share a tacit agreement that they would not engage in an internal debate as to whether sociology was a legitimate behavioral science. The arguments supporting sociology and other social sciences as legitimate and

rigorous intellectual inquiry were directed outward toward opinion leaders, policy makers, and others who might influence, for instance, the decisions of funding agencies.[72] Another reason that the social science advocates had to mount a public relations campaign was that the natural sciences were uneasy with the prospect of competing for research funding from government and private foundations. Natural scientists explicitly stated that "social sciences possessed neither the necessary corpus of generally accepted theoretical and methodological achievements to be considered truly scientific nor the longstanding social or institutional sanction for the pursuit of anything approaching scientific work."[73]

The battle came to a head in the mid-1940s, when the social sciences sought entry into what would become the National Science Foundation (NSF). Some years earlier, shortly after World War I, the discipline of sociology (standing in, for all intents and purposes, for social sciences generally) had been rejected for entry into the National Academy of Sciences. Anticipating a similarly harsh reaction again from chemists, physicists, medical researchers, and other natural and physical scientists aligned with the proposed NSF, the Social Science Research Council asked Parsons to prepare a paper laying out the arguments for including social sciences in the new agency. Parsons complied and wrote that in the postwar era, the most important problems were not in the realm of understanding and controlling nature but in the realm of social stability and social order. The social sciences, he argued, were in the best position to study and understand these new challenges. There was much resistance from natural scientists as well as from members of Congress, where a bill to fund the NSF had to pass. The critiques of Parsons's position paper were all in the vein of castigating social science as undefined, unscientific, politically motivated, lacking integrity, and so forth.[74] Parsons countered that social sciences were part of a larger, modern scientific endeavor; that they offered insights into social problems that natural sciences could not easily discern; and that they could offer "social technology" with which government might solve social problems.[75] In 1950, Congress created the NSF but left the social sciences out of the legislation. Despite the defeat, Parsons, his students, and many sociologists and social scientists in various fields devoted themselves more than ever to the scientific study of societies and social problems.

Perhaps no other effort epitomized this devotion to behavioral approaches to social science more than the "Studies in Social Psychology during World War II" project, published in 1949 and 1950 as the multivolume *The American Soldier*.[76] The books summarized wartime research by a team of social scientists led by sociologist Samuel Stouffer. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, Secretary of War Henry Stimson organized a Research Branch within the U.S. Army and staffed it with the most prominent and

promising sociologists and psychologists from the nation's leading universities. Their charge was to study everything about how soldiers lived in wartime. By the end of World War II, the researchers had distributed hundreds of thousands of surveys on dozens of topics, including morale, medical care, reenlistment, race relations, postwar plans, USO facilities, and attitudes of soldiers in various theaters of operations.[77] Stouffer's introduction neatly summarized the logic of behavioral social science: He wrote that the "object of study [must] be isolated and accurately described, preferably by measurement, as the test of adequacy of the theory, in comparison with alternative theories, must be rigorous, preferably evidenced by controlled experiment, and preferably replicated."[78] Such statements as these helped establish a vocabulary for social sciences that emulated the natural and physical sciences. The *American Soldier* books helped establish the postwar norm for the conduct of research in the behavioral social sciences: quantitative methods and incremental accumulation of knowledge with the goal of building general theories of human behavior.

Of course, Stouffer and his associates were not immune from criticism. Sociologists in the humanist traditions were especially pointed in their critiques. Alfred McClung Lee decried what he called "assembly line" social science and claimed the approach undermined theory building rather than facilitated it. Lee wrote that theory building "arises from long and careful working and reworking of data by an individual scientist" rather than by "committee thinking," which "places a premium on the plausible, the pat, and the salable, and on the ideas of those who carry weight for reasons of personal presence, status, and/or power."[79] Robert Lynd questioned the morality of the kind of social science represented by the *American Soldier* studies, wondering whether "these volumes depict science being used with great skill to sort out and to control men for purposes not of their own willing."[80] These critiques foreshadowed an attack on the field of sociology itself by C. Wright Mills, who disdained sociologists for "fetishization" of quantification and the techniques of natural science. In his view, "the attempt to imitate exact science narrows the mind to microscopic fields of inquiry, rather than expanding it to embrace man and society as a whole," and as a result, the social scientist "is not as likely to have as balanced an intellect as a top-flight journalist."[81]

Notwithstanding these criticisms, *The American Soldier* represented the ascendance of a behavioral orientation to the study of human relations and societies. At the same time, U.S. foreign relations were becoming increasingly complex. Cold War tensions rose after a series of events between 1948 and 1950. In February 1948, the Soviets sponsored a Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia and later that year imposed a blockade of Berlin. In October 1949, Mao Zedong established the People's Republic

of China after defeating U.S.-backed Chiang Kai-shek in a long civil war. The following summer, North Korean soldiers invaded South Korea, and the conflict quickly became a proxy war between Cold War adversaries, with the Chinese and Soviets supporting North Korea and the United States and the United Nations aiding South Korea. Within this Cold War context, the *American Soldier* studies helped convince government agencies and private foundations, despite the earlier NSF decision, to fund social science research that might assist in America's hot and cold wars.[82] The level of funding for the social sciences did not reach the levels that the physical sciences and engineering achieved, but for scholars accustomed to scant extramural financial support for research, it must have seemed like winning a lottery. Federal funding of university research increased as government agencies sought to enhance their knowledge of the politics and culture of geopolitically sensitive areas where the Cold War might be fought. For example, as mentioned earlier, VOA funded the Columbia University–led field research in 1949 and 1950 upon which Lerner based *Passing of Traditional Society*. Universities also benefited from the establishment of area studies centers under Title VI of the National Defense Education Act that Congress passed in 1958. The initial allocation for Title VI was $3.5 million, much of which went to research on modernization and questions of "third world" development. In 1958, Harry Alpert calculated the "total national effort in social science research" from all sources—public and private—at approximately $215 million.[83]

Between 1946 and 1958, private foundations alone gave $85 million for social science research (nearly half of that money going to just three universities: Harvard, Columbia, and University of California–Berkeley).[84] The three largest foundations—Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller—viewed themselves as supporting important aims of U.S. foreign policy. The president of the Ford Foundation between 1950 and 1953 was Paul Hoffman, who had been administrator for the Marshall Plan. Thus, Gilman has noted, it was not a coincidence that Ford saw itself as doing for the whole world what the Marshall Plan had done for Europe. Meanwhile, social scientists saw that if they turned their analytical skills toward the study of modernization of the postcolonial world in ways that would also generate information to help the government contain the Soviet Union and China, research dollars would flow in their direction. These researchers were not merely being opportunistic: Most also viewed the work as their patriotic duty.[85] On the other hand, Simpson has argued in *Science of Coercion* that social scientists were complicit in U.S. neocolonialism in the postcolonial world. Many leading communication scholars knowingly and actively participated in government-sponsored research that fit ideologically with anti-Communist beliefs and helped expand the American sphere of influence.[86]

Race Relations

The years following World War II were important ones for American race relations. In parts of the country, there was much soul searching about racial inequality, particularly after the racial theories of Nazism had been laid bare. The Nazi regime believed that the German people were the epitome of a biologically superior race of white Aryans. This racial theory provided justification for policies designed to systematically exterminate people whom the regime deemed inferior. After defeating Nazism in Europe, many Americans seemed uneasy with racial inequality and discrimination at home. These concerns were also linked to the ongoing Cold War to the extent that racial tensions in America not only provided fodder for Soviet propaganda but also provoked anger among potential Cold War allies in the emerging postcolonial nations.[87]

Racism refers to a system of thought that classifies people on the basis of perceived inherent qualities shared among a group of individuals and then arranges the subsequent "racial" categories into hierarchies suggesting superiority and inferiority of those qualities. Geographer James Blaut has written persuasively about the complicated ways that racist practices endure even as racial theory—a structure of ideas that purport to empirically explain differences of "race"—changes from epoch to epoch.[88] Racist practices are, in other words, historical constants and are upheld, justified, and sometimes masked by changing racial theories that are consistent with the changing intellectual environment of the age. Blaut identified three major structures of Western racial theory. Religious theories of race, based on the Bible, were dominant up to the early nineteenth century. Between about 1850 and 1950, biological theories of race based on natural science were dominant. Contemporary cultural theories of race are based on certain views of cultural history and difference.

Religious theories of race stated that God had created white people at the headwaters of the Tigris River near the Caucasus Mountains, the home of the Caucasian race. In these theories, God gave white people agriculture, cities, arts, and so forth, and all pre-Christian history took place among whites in a region between Rome and Mesopotamia. As people migrated out of this region, those who went south into Africa became dark-skinned and lost the civilized nature of their white ancestors. White European Christians believed that they were superior to nonwhites, because God had favored them above others.[89]

Biological theories of race became dominant in the mid–nineteenth century. They did not completely supplant religious theories of race, as oppression of one people by another in the name of religious superiority occurred even after 1850. Biological theories of race are often traced back

to the thinking of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. He wrote in 1809 that organisms were capable of passing on environmentally influenced traits to their off-spring. As evidence, Lamarck pointed to the blacksmith, whose muscular arms and manual dexterity were inherited from previous generations of blacksmiths. Lamarck's ideas influenced social scientists trying to explain what they supposed were racially based differences not in physical features but in sociocultural characteristics, such as intelligence, morals, and manners. At midcentury, Arthur de Gobineau argued that differences among races were permanent and everlasting, saying that some races were naturally gifted while others were destined to be inferior. His argument was Lamarckian in the sense that it asserted the continued inheritance of inferior characteristics from generation to generation.[90]

One of the weaknesses of the Lamarckian view on racial inheritance was that it lacked an explanation of how racial traits actually were passed down. A theory for the inheritance of racial traits was made possible by the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species,* which introduced the notion of gradual, cumulative, and natural evolution, and the 1871 publication of Darwin's *Descent of Man,* which introduced natural selection, the idea that over long periods of time, species would evolve and adapt themselves to their environment. A few years before the publication of *Origin of the Species,* Herbert Spencer released a series of books and monographs that argued that everything in nature operated by its own laws and ought to be left alone. Lamarckians were quick to graft Darwin to Spencer by suggesting that the idea of evolution and natural selection ought to be applied to the social world as well as the biological. Spencer interpreted Darwin as arguing that evolution and natural selection meant "survival of the fittest," an idea that became the core precept of Social Darwinism (Darwin himself had never used the phrase). Thus, while Darwin's argument was important, it was Spencer's interpretation of Darwin that provided the key explanations for racial inheritance sought by the "race scientists" (especially the eugenicists) of the nineteenth century.[91]

Biological theories of race began to lose their luster a few years after the end of the First World War. Against the current of biological racism inherent in Spencer's Social Darwinism, some American intellectuals argued for an environmental explanation for racial difference. These academics were influenced by the cultural relativism framework of anthropologist Franz Boas, who wrote in the 1890s that differences among ethnic and racial groups resulted from historical and environmental experiences, not from inherent biological differences.[92] Boas believed that all cultures were changing and evolving. Each group had the ability and capacity to develop its unique set of cultural forms. Over time, all groups could achieve cultural fulfillment. However, due to varying historical contexts and cul-

tural norms, each group took its own path toward full cultural development. Boas's views were rooted in his empirical research. He spent several months in the Arctic region working on a geography project in the late 1880s. While there, he gained such a high measure of respect for the indigenous population that he came away convinced that no group was inherently superior to another. By the turn of the twentieth century, after fieldwork in the American Great Lakes region and Baffinland, he was arguing for the principle of cultural relativism, in direct opposition to the Social Darwinists.[93] Boas and his students worked tirelessly, arguing for the significance and relevance of the notion of cultural relativism. Their ideas, previously marginalized, found favor as biological theories of race were increasingly discredited.

Biological theories of race did not completely fall from dominance, however, until the middle of the twentieth century. After the defeat of fascism and Nazism, social theorists were uncomfortable with the "American dilemma," Gunnar Myrdal's phrase for the contradiction between the country's egalitarian ideals and the racist practices against African Americans and other minorities.[94] The thrust of Myrdal's book was that "the Negro" could change culturally and ought to be given the chance to internalize American values and enter the fabric of American life. White Americans were encouraged to assist American blacks in discovering and embracing "American" values. Charles W. Mills has written perceptively that liberalism of this kind might as well be labeled "white liberalism": a "theory whose terms originally restricted full personhood to whites and relegated nonwhites to an inferior category, so that its schedule of rights and prescriptions for justice were all color-coded." Thus, for Mills, racism was not an anomaly within otherwise liberal societies but was "symbiotically related" to liberalism.[95] This paternalistic and racialized liberalism encouraged gradual change in race relations and eschewed any move toward radical or revolutionary shifts in the relations of actual power among whites and blacks.

Reflecting this perspective in the international relations area was an effort in American academic circles, funding centers, government and military agencies, and the foreign policy establishment to develop a framework to explain that nonwhite peoples of the postcolonial world were only culturally backward, not biologically inferior. A new racial theory emerged to counteract the idea that European Americans were innately superior to postcolonial peoples and that nonwhites were incapable of change. The new theory proposed that any and all nonwhite societies could realize their potential and capacity by learning how to think rationally, behaving in appropriate ways, and committing themselves to a set of Western values and orientations. This logic allowed Western academics to substitute, as Samir Amin has pointed out, the racial category "white" with the cultural

category "European and American," and the idea that nonwhites were racially inferior with the notion that whites were merely culturally superior.[96] Thus, because the gap between whites and nonwhites was not biological (and therefore not permanent), it was possible for nonwhites to "catch up" to whites through, for example, a process of modernization. Specifically, modernization scholars made an argument, parallel to Myrdal's, that residents of the postcolonial nations, because they had the capacity to change (per the cultural theory of race), ought to be given the chance to adopt Western values and enter the modern world.

For two main reasons, a cultural theory of race could not have matched the intellectual needs of the moment more perfectly for America in the Cold War era. First, postwar academics needed a way to legitimately dispense with the idea that race was immutable, as biological theories of race suggested. When Truman announced Point Four in 1949, he told the world that the United States was ready and willing to help "develop" the postcolonial world. Introducing this transitive meaning of development carried with it an important implication. Truman suggested that people in postcolonial lands, believed by European colonizers to be permanently inferior, could, in fact, be taught to change their outlooks, behaviors, and attitudes in ways that could move nations toward modernity.[97] In terms of racial theory, embracing the idea that postcolonial nonwhite people could change their mental, psychological, and moral traits meant that biological theories of race had to be replaced. Thus, Boas was brought in from the cold, so to speak, and his ideas revived. His notions that each "culture-group" could develop and change over time and that no group was naturally superior to another were embraced.[98] Toward the close of World War II, Margaret Mead, a student of Boas's, argued in a paper about "national character" that "the differences in race or sub-race membership are irrelevant [and] that there are no known psychological differences which are dependent upon race as such."[99]

Second, the cultural theory of race created space for the Point Four–inspired notion of development and the theory of modernization. A cultural theory of race enabled the West to retain its notion of superiority over the non-West without resorting to largely discredited theories of biological racism. One of the key players in making these arguments was sociologist Edward Shils. In the summer of 1959, Shils delivered a keynote address on political development in the "new states" of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. In the speech, Shils provided a detailed definition of the "modern state": It entailed democracy, land reform, progressive income taxation, universal suffrage, universal public education, rational technology, scientific knowledge, industrialization, and a high standard of living. "Modern," said Shils, "means being Western without the onus of following

the West. It is the model of the West detached in some way from its geographical origins and locus."[100] With this speech, Shils created "foundational certainty" among social scientists that the purpose of modernization was building nations all over the world using the blueprint that American history provided.[101] Shils advocated the use of the term "modernization" to describe the transition from "backward" to "modern" nations, because he thought it avoided implications of Western superiority suggested by the terms "Christianization" or "Westernization."[102]

Thus, as American scholars began after World War II to rethink their views and understanding of racial and ethnic minorities within their own nation, they also began to rethink their view of residents of the postcolonial countries. In fact, Thomas Borstelmann has shown how sensitivity to the demands for civil rights in the United States had a profound impact on the ways national leaders regarded demands for independence and self-determination across Asia and Africa. With racial equality a national priority, most American policy makers felt they had to support independence and freedom for formerly colonized peoples. The story of civil rights reform in America was intimately related, as Mary Dudziak and Gayle Plumber have shown, to the postwar foreign policy narrative about American democracy and its superiority over Soviet totalitarianism. But the domestic-international link took other forms, too. For example, in some quarters, Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other people of color were thought to be afflicted with fatalism and feeble-mindedness. These categories were then deployed as part of domestic welfare policies to eliminate what Oscar Lewis called a "culture of poverty" and then also transformed into international aid policies for eradicating a "subculture of peasantry" in the postcolonial world. American racial liberals envisioned modernization as a means to solve problems rooted in the cultural inferiority of postcolonial people, and the "developmental state" was the postcolonial analog of the welfare state at home.[103]

Although European colonialism created and maintained racial differences, American modernization wanted to obliterate them. But even as modernization theory ostensibly dismissed the biological theories of race linked to colonial discourses, such as civilizing mission and white man's burden, it continued to view the postcolonial world as culturally inferior and caught up in its "backwardness."[104] As Michael Hunt put it, "Policy makers, whose impulse to see the world in terms of hierarchy was ever more at odds with the need for political discretion, found their way out of their bind by recasting the old racial hierarchy into cultural terms supplied by development theorists."[105] *Passing of Traditional Society* in some ways epitomized these American trends in racial thinking. Although Lerner's analysis cast residents of the Middle East as somewhat deficient as compared to

Americans and Europeans on important indicators of modernity, such as the capacity for empathy, he also believed that they could and would eventually become modern. For Lerner and other modernization theorists and policy makers, residents of the postcolonial world required the guiding hand of those people and nations that were already modern to show the way. If this view of modernization seems ethnocentric and paternalistic, it is because ethnocentrism and paternalism were at the core of postwar racial liberalism.[106]

SOURCES AND METHODS

The methods used in this book to explore the intellectual influences and personal experiences that shaped Lerner's thinking on modernization are essentially historical. Aside from closely reading Lerner's military records and published works and tracing citation paths to identify Lerner's sources, I have investigated correspondence, papers, research reports, manuscripts, publications, and books produced not only by Lerner but also by many members of his intellectual network, such as Lasswell, Lazarsfeld, Ithiel de Sola Pool, Pye, and others. I have also corresponded or spoken with several of his academic acquaintances, such as W. Philips Davison, Charles Glock, Alex Inkeles, Howard Perlmutter, Pye, and David Sills. From these data, it was possible to track the ways in which Lerner accumulated the theoretical, methodological, and empirical pieces from which he ultimately assembled the modernization study described in *Passing of Traditional Society*. However, it is sometimes difficult to precisely reconstruct historical narratives. With the information and materials at hand, it was possible only to build up thick approximations of the story under investigation. At times, the sedimented layers revealed tales that verifiable evidence solidly confirmed. Sometimes assertions had to be based on circumstantial evidence or, in yet other cases, on intelligent speculation or conjecture.

For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know precisely where and how a specific idea originates, and at times we are left with fragmentary evidence as to the genesis of even the most important concepts. One brief example is Lerner's conceptualization of empathy, which was the motor of psychosocial change in Lerner's modernization theory and is regarded as one of his most innovative ideas. Empathy is so central to Lerner's thinking about modernization, in fact, that the concept inevitably arises in several subsequent sections of this book. Many have assumed that the idea was borrowed more or less directly from David Riesman's notion of other-directedness, the idea that one was sensitive and responsive to external stimuli. It seems a reasonable assumption given that Riesman wrote the introduction to *Passing of Traditional Society*; that Riesman and

Lerner coauthored "Self and Society," a 1955 essay that dealt explicitly with empathy; and that Lerner himself wrote in a footnote in *Passing of Traditional Society* that said his "formulation approaches the typology of American society developed by David Riesman in his book, *The Lonely Crowd*."[107] However, if we dig deeper into the records, it is clear that although the two concepts were similar, Lerner did not necessarily view Riesman's idea as a major intellectual influence on his idea of empathy. Before the coauthored 1955 essay on empathy was published, Lerner seemed lukewarm not only about Riesman's idea of other-directedness but also about writing with Riesman. While working on the manuscript for *Passing of Traditional Society* in Paris in 1954, Lerner wrote a letter to his MIT colleague Pool in which he described a note he received from Riesman. Lerner said Riesman asked him to coauthor an article about the Middle East based on "his [Riesman's] point of view of the congruence between our two typologies." But, Lerner wrote to Pool, "this is a matter of indifference to me."[108]

Lerner readily acknowledged the Freudian basis of this notion of empathy. He wrote that the idea was a combination of introjection and projection[109] and later added that high levels of empathy, or "a high capacity to rearrange the self-system on short notice," characterized modern society.[110] Where might Lerner have picked up this Freudian perspective and vocabulary to describe his idea of empathy? Very likely, he absorbed the theoretical details from his close friend and mentor Lasswell, who had studied psychoanalysis in Europe with Freud protégé Theodor Reik. Lasswell then worked closely for a time with noted American Freud expert Harry Stack Sullivan, who coined the phrase "self-system," which Lerner later borrowed.[111] Finally, the empathy idea may have come to Lerner from conversations with Perlmutter, another MIT colleague, who was studying the social psychology of xenophobia and xenophilia. Perlmutter was investigating the cognitive mechanism that motivated a person to "move beyond his own location" and to accept and even seek out unfamiliar people and experiences.[112] Lerner's empathy was much like Perlmutter's xenophilia, but with the additional element that some types of people had the propensity and were more willing, even eager, to experience the world outside their immediate environs.

This brief digression about Lerner's use of the concept of empathy demonstrates the complexity of unraveling the history of ideas. In the absence of perfect record keeping and perfect memories, it is sometimes difficult to arrive at definitive answers. Reconstructing the historical record is an act of narration, a selection and assemblage of facts and figures, recollections and ideologies, truths and fictions. Thus, telling the story of how Lerner came to write *Passing of Traditional Society* is as much a production as the writing of the book itself.

THIS BOOK IS STRUCTURED around Lerner's institutional locations—the places he worked—starting in about 1942, as he moved toward writing *Passing of Traditional Society*. Daniel Tom Lerner was born in Brooklyn, New York, on October 30, 1917. He lived with his Russian émigré parents, Louis and Louetta, and sister, Lillian, on Montgomery Street in the East Flatbush section of Brooklyn. He attended New York City public schools, where he excelled in "everything but conduct."[113] He played clarinet and saxophone and was a member of the local musicians union. When Lillian once asked her brother why he was always reading books, Lerner replied, "Because they speak to me." After graduating from high school, Lerner enrolled at Johns Hopkins University in 1934, intending to become a physician. Within a few months, however, Lerner returned to New York when his father died at age forty-four. Lerner wanted to quit school and go to work, but his mother insisted he continue college. He enrolled at New York University and earned a bachelor's degree in English Literature in 1938 and a master's degree in English in 1939. Between 1940 and 1942, he taught courses in the English Department and took classes in Russian and Arabic, adding to a multilingual background that included French, Yiddish, and German.

In June 1942, Lerner was inducted into the U.S. Army. He completed basic training and was assigned to the 803rd Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Lerner graduated from Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in November 1942. For the next twelve months, Lerner received further training at the Signal Corps School and the Provost Marshal General School before he shipped out to Europe in the summer of 1944. Lerner fought in Normandy and was wounded in action on August 24, 1944, very likely during maneuvers with the French resistance near the city of Troyes. (Lerner received a Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his U.S. military service, as well as the Croix de Guerre from the French military.) After recovering from his wounds, Lerner was transferred to the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD), where he served as chief editor in the Intelligence Branch. Chapter 2 covers his experience as a propaganda specialist at PWD and the doctoral dissertation he wrote based on his experiences. Lerner's primary duty at PWD was to compile and distribute a weekly summary of intelligence. Working at PWD, Lerner read Lasswell's books on effective propaganda, considered the seminal works on the topic. He also was aware of the research that Morris Janowitz (working with Shils, Elmo Roper, Hazel Gaudet, and others) conducted on the effects of Allied propaganda on German military morale, work that assumed an important and intriguing role in postwar theories of mass media effects.

After the war, Lerner took a position at the Hoover Institute for War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. He was research director for a project called Revolution and the Development of International Relations (RADIR), a Carnegie-funded program to systematically analyze the composition of elite decision makers in key postwar countries and the configuration of key symbols in some of the world's prestige newspapers. Lerner worked directly with Lasswell, the intellectual leader of the project, who had developed a technique of detailed quantitative content analysis at his World War II post as director of Experimental Communication Division in the Library of Congress in Washington. This technique was to be one of the cornerstones of the RADIR research. While at Stanford, Lerner also published his dissertation as a book, coedited a book with Lasswell, and wrote a chapter in a book coedited by Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton. Chapter 3 covers Lerner's years at Stanford, where he worked between November 1946 and mid-1952. While at Stanford, Lerner also married Jean Weinstein in May 1947. She had been a friend of Lillian's and a grade behind him at the schools they all attended in Brooklyn. Lerner regularly thanked Jean for typing and retyping the multitudes of manuscripts he would write during his career. The Lerners had three children, Louise, Thomas, and Amy, who sometimes traveled with their parents on trips abroad.

During his years at Stanford, Lerner accepted visiting appointments at Columbia University on two separate occasions and worked there closely with Lazarsfeld and the staff of BASR. Chapter 4 covers Lerner's activities during his time at Columbia. Despite accepting a position as acting professor of Sociology at Stanford in fall 1950, Lerner arranged to take a six-month leave of absence the following year, from January to June 1951, to work in BASR as visiting professor of Sociology. It was a fateful turn of events in terms of Lerner's central role in modernization theory. BASR had recently negotiated a contract with VOA to conduct listener surveys in the Middle East. Lerner led the analysis for the data collected in Turkey and wrote several classified reports eventually submitted to VOA. Lerner returned to Columbia from July 1, 1952, to June 30, 1953, as a research associate in the Institute for War and Peace Studies. During these months, Lerner worked further on the VOA study, recoding the original data to allow cross-national comparisons and organizing the analysis around a comprehensive comparative study of several Middle East countries. This analysis was the basis for *Passing of Traditional Society*.

Lerner did not return to Stanford when his year at Columbia ended in the summer of 1953. Lerner landed a position at MIT in the new Center for International Studies (CENIS), which was funded with money from the CIA and a large grant from the Ford Foundation and would serve as a

major player in several areas of academic study and government policy concerning the postcolonial world. Lerner's CENIS colleagues included major thinkers in the area of modernization, such as Walt Rostow, Everett Hagen, Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, Pye, and others. Lerner thrived among these intellectual heavyweights. He published prolifically, led campus symposia on behavioral science, and was an enthralling classroom presence, peppering his lectures with Latin phrases, French poetry, literary allusions, and tales about his experiences in World War II.[114] Chapter 5 covers Lerner's early years at MIT, when he worked on the final drafts of *Passing of Traditional Society.*

Lerner's career trajectory through the military and the academy prepared him for writing *Passing of Traditional Society.* He saw the role of media in propaganda and the role of mass media in modernization as essentially the same: Media messages stimulated psychosocial change in the target audience. After the publication of *Passing of Traditional Society,* Lerner continued writing about mass media and modernization, and he continued traveling in the postcolonial world, observing the efforts of modernizers and participating in projects when invited. He attended conferences on development communication and wrote articles and book chapters reflecting how his thinking about development communication was evolving. Chapter 6 explores the changes in Lerner's thinking about mass media and modernization; considers the extent to which Lerner influenced development communication research; and suggests a combination of factors, such as social hierarchy and cultural identity, to explain the continuing significance of Lerner's modernization theory.

L ERNER RETIRED from MIT in 1977 at age fifty-nine. He took a position as adjunct professor of Sociology at University of California–Santa Cruz in early 1978. Lerner died of cancer seventeen months later, on May 1, 1980. At the time of his death, Lerner's interest and research in the areas of international relations and international communication were widely recognized and respected. In fact, Elihu Katz, himself an important figure in mass communication theory and research, called Lerner "the prophet of international communication,"[115] in recognition of the important role assumed by the RADIR project studies of international elites and prestige newspapers, the analysis of international broadcasting and propaganda, the cross-national comparative research embodied in *Passing of Traditional Society,* and his continuing reflections on development communication after the publication of his book. In all likelihood, Lerner would have been amused with Katz's designation, but it cannot be denied that his work was

part of the foundation from which many scholars and practitioners—not to mention some American presidents and secretaries of state—viewed the relations among more-powerful and less-powerful nations. Why, decades after the publication of *Passing of Traditional Society,* with evidence that complicates the claims and predictions contained therein, do many of Lerner's ideas remain so interesting? What accounts for their intellectual attraction and power? The following chapters delve into these questions.