



SEVENTY YEARS ago, in 1923, Elsie Clifton Parsons became president of the American Anthropological Society for a two-year term. During the 1910s, in her late thirties and early forties, she had distinguished herself as a social psychologist, anthropologist, ethnologist, and feminist, writing several important papers and books during the period Nancy Cott has associated with the birth of modern feminism.¹ By the time she was forty-nine, when she assumed the AES presidency, Elsie Parsons had become part of Boasian anthropology at Columbia University, immersing herself in ethnological research among the Pueblo Indians and funding the work of countless southern anthropologists and researchers, including many women. All of these women, who died in 1941, wrote more than a hundred and fifty articles on the Southwest, culminating in a two-volume grand synthesis, *Pueblo Indian Culture Change*.² In the 1960s and 1970s the AES continued to honor Elsie Parsons by awarding a prize each year to the author of the best graduate-student essay in a national competition. When the prize was discontinued the last time, it was given to the president and handed down from president to president as a symbol of the Society's debt to Elsie Parsons. Thus the 1989 AES meetings in Santa Fe, New Mexico, 100 miles from Española and Clara Trujillo, where Parsons stayed during her first trip to the Southwest in 1910, seemed an appropriate time to commemorate the work of Elsie Parsons. I particularly wanted to make a connection between Parsons's feminist writing



24

Feminist
Anthro-
pology:
The Legacy
of Elsie Clews
Parsons

SEVENTY YEARS ago, in 1923, Elsie Clews Parsons became president of the American Ethnological Society for a two-year term. During the 1910s, in her late thirties and early forties, she had distinguished herself as a social psychologist and feminist, writing several important books during the period Nancy Cott has associated with the birth of modern feminism.¹ By the age of forty-nine, when she assumed the AES presidency, Parsons had become part of Boasian anthropology at Columbia University, immersing herself in ethnological research among the Pueblos and funding the work of countless southwestern researchers, including many women. All told, Parsons, who died in 1941, wrote more than ninety-five articles on the Southwest, culminating in her two-volume grand synthesis, *Pueblo Indian Religion*.² In the 1960s and 1970s the AES honored Parsons by awarding a prize each year to the best graduate-student essay in a national competition. When the prize was discontinued the last medal was given to the president and handed down from president to president as a symbol of office. Thus the 1989 AES meetings in Santa Fe, a few miles from Española and Clara True's ranch, where Parsons stayed during her first trip to the Southwest in 1910, seemed an appropriate time to commemorate the work of Elsie Clews Parsons. I particularly wanted to make a connection between Parsons's feminist writing and the



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*Elsie Clews Parsons at the San Gabriel Ranch in Alcalde, New Mexico, ca. 1923.
(Photograph courtesy of the American Philosophical Society)*

reemergence of feminism in anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s. Michelle Rosaldo and I were ignorant of Elsie Clews Parsons when we edited *Woman, Culture and Society*³ in the early 1970s. Instead, we turned to Margaret Mead for the quotation that begins our book. We might have written a different introduction had we read Parsons's books.

My own interest in Parsons I owe to Barbara Babcock and Nancy Parezo, who invited me to participate in a conference on "Daughters of the Desert"—a retrospective on women anthropologists who conducted research on Native American

cultures in the Southwest—held at the contributions were explored in a paper in the conference catalogue by Babcock and Parezo. The research of Ester Goldfrank, Ruth Bunzel, and others from many papers, and her role as a mentor, are mentioned minimally in my own contribution.⁵ In both cases, I am indebted to Babcock's more recent and more detailed work, which underscores the feminist sensibility in Parsons's work.

Throughout this paper I shall compare the work of the 1920s to the feminist anthropology that emerged in the 1970s, highlighting important similarities in the focus on culture and the teens and the feminist anthropology's salient tendency was followed by a similar research for Parsons in the 1920s and for the 1970s. There are crucial differences. The more detailed work in the 1920s and 1930s contrasts sharply with the work in the writings of women anthropologists. The complex differences between the state of a period and that of the present, as well as the context of feminism of the 1920s and 1970s, are explored in the following sections.

The Making of a Feminist

Before exploring this comparison further, it is necessary to establish the historical order. Elsie Clews grew up in a wealthy family. Her father, Elsie Clews, was a Wall Street broker, and her mother, Elsie Clews, was a Wall Street broker, and her father, James Madison. The family summered in the Adirondacks, and Elsie's mother put aside \$10,000 to fund her education, and managed to talk her father into letting her attend Barnard College, from which she graduated in 1896. She then attended Barnard, studying under Franklin H. Johnson, who taught briefly at Barnard before marrying Elsie's father in 1894, twenty-four. Parsons's feminism grew out of her reaction to the confining life of a wealthy Victorian woman. She idealized her mother by going for an unorthodox education at the secluded Newport beach when she was a teenager.

Herbert Parsons tolerated his wife's independence, but it threatened to disrupt his political career. He was a prominent post he held between 1905 and 1911. The controversy created headlines in New York in 1906. The controversy at Barnard, which took an evolutionary view of culture, and ethnological data. It created a furor because of its copy to Theodore Roosevelt, Herbert's



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cultures in the Southwest—held at the University of Arizona in 1986. Parsons's contributions were explored in a paper by Louis Hieb and have been detailed in the conference catalogue by Babcock and Parezo.⁴ Parsons's key financial support for the research of Ester Goldfrank, Ruth Bunzel, Ruth Benedict, and others emerged from many papers, and her role as a mentor to Gladys Reichard was covered very minimally in my own contribution.⁵ In both writing and revising this paper I became indebted to Babcock's more recent and insightful research, which uncovers and underscores the feminist sensibility in Parsons's work.⁶

Throughout this paper I shall compare Parsons's scholarship of the teens and 1920s to the feminist anthropology that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s. I see important similarities in the focus on cultural universals in both Parsons's writing in the teens and the feminist anthropology some of us wrote in the 1970s. This universalizing tendency was followed by a transition to more detailed ethnographic research for Parsons in the 1920s and for feminists in the 1980s. On the other hand, there are crucial differences. The more muted feminism in Parsons's ethnological work in the 1920s and 1930s contrasts with its more explicit and continued presence in the writings of women anthropologists today. This relates, I argue, to complex differences between the state of anthropological theory in the late Boasian period and that of the present, as well as differences between the social and political context of feminism of the 1920s and 1980s.

The Making of a Feminist

Before exploring this comparison further, a few details of Parsons's life are in order. Elsie Clews grew up in a wealthy New York City family. Her father, Henry Clews, was a Wall Street broker, and her mother was a distant relative of President James Madison. The family summered at a mansion ("The Rocks") in Newport, and Elsie's mother put aside \$10,000 each year for "mistakes in clothes."⁷ Elsie managed to talk her father into letting her attend newly opened Barnard College, from which she graduated in 1896. She went on to earn her M.A. and Ph.D. at Barnard, studying under Franklin H. Giddings, an evolutionary sociologist. She taught briefly at Barnard before marrying Herbert Parsons in 1900, at the age of twenty-four. Parsons's feminism grew out of her independent spirit and was a rejection of the confining life of a wealthy Victorian debutante and socialite. She scandalized her mother by going for an unchaperoned swim with a young man on a secluded Newport beach when she was a teenager.⁸

Herbert Parsons tolerated his wife's independence and feminism, even though it threatened to disrupt his political career as a reform Republican congressman, a post he held between 1905 and 1911. The publication of her book *The Family*⁹ created headlines in New York in 1906. The book was an outline of her lectures at Barnard, which took an evolutionary view of marriage and family patterns using ethnological data. It created a furor because it advocated trial marriage. Elsie sent a copy to Theodore Roosevelt, Herbert's patron in the Republican party, hoping to

reassure the president that the book was really "very dry reading." Roosevelt seemed pleased to receive a copy and in a teasing manner promised to read the famous book and discuss it over lunch.¹⁰

During the first ten years of her marriage Parsons bore six children, four of whom lived to adulthood. Her wealth allowed her to raise her children with a full staff of housekeepers and child nurses and gave her the freedom to travel. She spent several years in Washington, D.C., but returned to New York in 1911 after her husband finished his third term as a congressman. Between 1913 and 1916 she wrote five feminist books, interconnected studies that focused on how marriage, the family, religion, and social etiquette constrain women. In several she emphasized the need for individual freedom and choice.

At the same time she began to abandon her brand of sociological feminism for ethnology. As Peter Hare, her grandnephew, writes in his biography, "She moved slowly from a generalizing style to rigorous empirical methods."¹¹ During those years she came under the influence of Franz Boas and his graduate students, Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, and Pliny Goddard. Goddard wrote to Parsons, characterizing the dual nature of her life in this transitional period when she was attracted to anthropology yet still writing feminist books: "Your winter activities are propaganda and your summer ones research."¹² By 1916 (at forty-two) she talked about giving up generalizing. In an oft-quoted passage to Lowie, she wrote, "You [Lowie], Kroeber and Hocart make the life of a psychologist not worth living. I see plainly I shall have to keep to the straight and narrow path of kinship nomenclature and folktale collecting." By the 1920s, when Parsons was president of the AES, her publications were almost completely ethnological.

A closer examination of these two crucial decades in Parsons's life—the teens and the 1920s—reveals the social and intellectual forces that first shaped Parsons's feminism and that then propelled her into an anthropological setting with little room for such concerns in an era of political quiescence and a more private feminism.

Parsons's Early Writings and the Feminism of the Teens

The teens, particularly the years of World War I, were a time of social ferment and protest in which socialist, feminist, and other radical ideas were common in New York City, especially among the middle-class and upper-class avant-garde in Greenwich Village. Nancy Cott contrasts the Greenwich Village feminists with earlier suffragists. These college-educated, bourgeois women rejected the image of service and motherhood associated with the women's movement of the nineteenth century. They were women who welcomed irreverent and radical behavior in art, politics, and the labor movement. According to Cott, "They considered themselves socialists or progressives leaning toward socialism and had, unlike most of the American population, a tolerance for 'isms.' They embedded their critique of gender hierarchy in a critique of the social system."¹³ They wanted to break with dichotomized categories of "Man" and "Woman" and to equate womanhood with

humanity. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman running, out of prison and off pedestal woman."¹⁴

During the teens, after her return to New York City, she embraced the new feminism, but her relationships with men were complex. She moved in the same circles in New York City. The first was with Franz Boas. Parsons met Boas as early as 1907, and they became close friends in anthropology. In 1913 Boas helped her move to New York. They had a relatively formal relationship with other anthropologists like Robert Lowie, Goddard, and Kroeber, inviting them to Massachusetts. Robert Lowie recalled that he was one of her students, whom she fed and sent off to work. Her relationship with Boas was primarily an admirer, her relationship with Kroeber was more intimate and complex one.¹⁷ Their friendship was interrupted by a month of joint fieldwork at Zuni in 1915. In later years they resumed a respectful partnership. Kroeber wrote that he admired her "rigorous

Parsons made her first trips to the field. Her fieldwork increased in frequency as she became more committed to "insistence on a rigorously empirical approach to fieldwork and method."²⁰ In 1915 she observed a month of joint fieldwork at Zuni. She made additional trips to Zuni in 1916, 1917, and 1918. In 1919, including the month with Kroeber in Laguna in 1919.²² These short excursions resulted in graphic articles on Zuni and Laguna that were published in 1920.

The second circle was that of the Greenwich Village salon she met Walter Lippmann, with whom she had a long relationship. She also came to know Max Eastman and his magazine, *The Masses*. The magazine, a well-regarded literary and political journal, evoked censorship by the post office in 1918 for antiwar views. *The Masses* was edited by Max Eastman, Floyd Dell (a sexual radical), and John Reed (whose later commitment to communism is shown in the movie *Reds*). It was full of antiwar drawings, and poetry. Nevertheless, it had many cartoon critiques of male domination. Parsons wrote Mable Dodge, and articles on birth control and the role in the garment trade.

Parsons's third circle included Heterodoxy, a group who met for Saturday lunches every two weeks starting in 1912. Founded by Marie Jennie Heterodoxy, it included women, activists and professionals. Among them were Max Eastman, Stella Coman Ballantine (Emma G

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humanity. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman described the "Feminist": "Here she comes,
running, out of prison and off pedestal; chains off, crown off, halo off, just a live
woman."¹⁴

During the teens, after her return from Washington, Parsons was part of this
new feminism, but her relationships were broader and included three intellectual
circles in New York City. The first was that of Boas and his male graduate students.
Parsons met Boas as early as 1907, and she was the first woman whom he interested
in anthropology. In 1913 Boas helped Parsons arrange a trip to the Yucatán,¹⁵ but
they had a relatively formal relationship during this period. She became closer to
Lowie, Goddard, and Kroeber, inviting the latter two to her home in Lenox, Massa-
chusetts. Robert Lowie recalled that her door was open to the younger graduate
students, whom she fed and sent off to enjoy her box at the opera.¹⁶ While Goddard
was primarily an admirer, her relationship with Kroeber was a much more challeng-
ing and complex one.¹⁷ Their friendship was at first warm and playful and then, after
a month of joint fieldwork at Zuni in September 1917, difficult and more distant.¹⁸
In later years they resumed a respectful professional relationship and, after her death,
Kroeber wrote that he admired her "rigorous honesty and courage of mind."¹⁹

Parsons made her first trips to the Southwest between 1910 and 1913. These
increased in frequency as she became more attracted to anthropology, with its
"insistence on a rigorously empirical approach" and "a consciousness of problem
and method."²⁰ In 1915 she observed a Navajo Enemy War ceremony and went on
to visit Zuni.²¹ She made additional trips to Zuni and Laguna over the next four
years, including the month with Kroeber at Zuni in 1917 and fieldwork with Boas
in Laguna in 1919.²² These short excursions provided the material for her ethno-
graphic articles on Zuni and Laguna that were published in the late teens.²³

The second circle was that of the Greenwich Village radicals. In Mable Dodge's
salon she met Walter Lippmann, with whom she helped found the *New Republic*.²⁴
She also came to know Max Eastman and wrote several articles for his monthly *The
Masses*. The magazine, a well-regarded "underground" journal of the time, pro-
voked censorship by the post office in 1917 and a conspiracy trial of the editors in
1918 for antiwar views. *The Masses* was dominated by such male "heavies" as
Max Eastman, Floyd Dell (a sexual radical who wrote *Love in the Machine Age*),
and John Reed (whose later commitment to the Russian Revolution was chronicled
in the movie *Reds*). It was full of antiwar cartoons, accounts of strikes, avant-garde
drawings, and poetry. Nevertheless, it had an important feminist component, with
many cartoon critiques of male dominance, poems by Amy Lowell, fiction by
Mable Dodge, and articles on birth control, Emma Goldman's trial, and women's
role in the garment trade.

Parsons's third circle included Heterodoxy, a club of sixty-five radical feminists
who met for Saturday lunches every two weeks in Greenwich Village beginning
in 1912. Founded by Marie Jennie Howe, it included heterosexual and lesbian
women, activists and professionals. Among its famous members were Crystal East-
man, Stella Coman Ballantine (Emma Goldman's niece), Charlotte Perkins Gilman,

Agnes deMille, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. At their lunches members discussed women's rights, political issues of the day, and a whole host of other topics—from how women were raising their children to revelations about their own upbringing.²⁵ One of the members used Parsons's classification of family types from her book *The Family* in a published spoof on mating patterns found among the members of Heterodoxy entitled, "Marriage Customs and Taboo among the Early Heterodities."²⁶

Parsons's writing during this period (1912–1919) was prolific—and her most explicitly feminist. She published five books and a number of scholarly articles in the *American Anthropologist*, the *Journal of American Folklore*, and the *American Journal of Sociology*. She also wrote popular pieces for *The Masses*, the *New Republic*, and *Harper's Weekly*. In her book *Beyond Separate Spheres*, Rosalind Rosenberg argues that by the teens Parsons had given up the evolutionary approach espoused by her teacher Franklin Giddings and evident in her book *The Family*. She rejected a "slavish devotion to evolutionary theory" and a set of cultural stages. Instead, she became a "de facto functionalist," arguing that the principle motives of human behavior are unconscious and that civilized and primitive peoples are no different in their behavior.²⁷

Parsons's books of this period focus on the theme of social restraint, and they juxtapose cross-cultural examples with ones from her own society. There is a generalizing tone here—a search for universals and a focus on women's social roles. *The Old-Fashioned Woman* and *Religious Chastity*, both published in 1913, and *Fear and Conventionality*, *Social Freedom*, and *Social Rule* all reflect a concern for the universal in women's experience that is parallel to the themes emphasized by those of us who wrote for *Woman, Culture and Society* in 1974.²⁸

The Old-Fashioned Woman, to cite the best example, uses ethnographic evidence to demonstrate how women's lives are constrained from birth to widowhood by taboos, confinement, and exclusion from male affairs. Digging through the available ethnography of the day (for example, Spencer and Gillen on the Aborigines, Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and George Dorsey on the Wichita), Parsons juxtaposes the experience of women in tribal groups with that of women in ancient state societies and in our own "modern time." Each page is a pastiche of examples.

For instance, in the chapter "In Quarantine," about menstrual taboos, she says, "But it is during menstruation that a woman is most generally considered dangerous. . . . The Bushmen think that at a glance from a menstruous woman, a man becomes at once transfixed and turned into a tree which talks. . . . If a Pueblo Indian touches a menstruous woman, or if a Chippeway uses her fire, he is bound to fall ill."²⁹ And the list continues. So-called civilized societies, she notes, also harbor such beliefs and often restrict women's behavior. Women are banned from sugar refineries in the north of France (because a menstruous woman would blacken the sugar), and in England people believe that meat cured by a menstruous woman is tainted.³⁰

In a discussion of marriage entitled "Her Market Price," Parsons announces that "Women are an important item in primitive trade." In this chapter she discusses various forms of bride-price before turning her attention to prostitution and slav-

ery, other examples of the exchange of women. In "The Exchange of Women and Exclusive Sex" Parsons tells us that "Women share in public affairs. The Nagas have a spot for women." Women are often frightened or they are given "minor parts," thus somewhat Parsons called "The Ladies' Gallery."

In these and other chapters we see the confinement and constriction of women. An example is cited (meticulously footnoted) of women's condition. European examples juxtaposed with those from tribal peoples, the American Indians, and the Samoans. African kingdoms help to amplify Parsons's exclusion.³²

Parsons's contributions to *The Masses* control and constraint. Her article on marriage among the Arabs, and the Koreans that mark a change. A Tlingit woman changes the silver pin. A woman burns her dolls, a Spartan bride. In Korea, it is the man, not the bride, who is "Society," Parsons writes, "modern and novel features, insists on making of it a novel rather, through marriage thus artificialized."

In two of her later books Parsons breaks from men, developing a theory grounded in social categories. In *Fear and Conventionality* are a way of erecting barriers because of novelty, and dislike of the unusual. "Sex difference between its members society has to be as much as possible." Thus "No Vedda man is allowed to see his own age except his wife. . . . Corean bride is escorted at all in the women's part of the house. . . . The cab driver since they share the same seat."

The possibility of breaking through *Social Freedom*, published in 1915. Sex, along with social classification that sets up rigid divisions, "there is some attempt to struggle. . . . Equality by sex is the gift *par excellence* of women." Parsons believed that sex relations increased freedom from rigid social categories.

Flynn. At their lunches members discussed day, and a whole host of other topics—from revelations about their own upbringing.²⁵ Classification of family types from her book *The* patterns found among the members of *Heterodities* and Taboo among the Early Heterodities.”²⁶ (1912–1919) was prolific—and her most books and a number of scholarly articles in *Journal of American Folklore*, and the *American* popular pieces for *The Masses*, the *New* book *Beyond Separate Spheres*, Rosalind had given up the evolutionary approach and evident in her book *The Family*. She “evolutionary theory” and a set of cultural stages. “evolutionary theory,” arguing that the principle motives of that civilized and primitive peoples are no dif-

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ery, other examples of the exchange of women for goods. In the chapter on “The Exclusive Sex” Parsons tells us that “Women are quite generally excluded from a share in public affairs. The Nagas have a war stone no woman may look upon and live. In anti-suffrage argument a voting booth seems to be nearly as dangerous a spot for women.” Women are often frightened away from men’s exclusive activities or they are given “minor parts,” thus securing feminine devotion and becoming what Parsons called “The Ladies’ Gallery.”³¹

In these and other chapters we see the overarching shadow of male dominance, the confinement and constriction of women, and their lack of value. Example after example is cited (meticulously footnoted), but the point is the universality of women’s condition. European examples (of so-called civilized peoples) are juxtaposed with those from tribal peoples as diverse as the Australian Aborigines, the American Indians, and the Samoans. Women’s positions in archaic states and African kingdoms help to amplify Parsons’s commentary on constraint, taboo, and exclusion.³²

Parsons’s contributions to *The Masses* take on these same themes of social control and constraint. Her article on marriage cites customs among the Tlingit, the Arabs, and the Koreans that mark a change in status, conferring “a new life.” A Tlingit woman changes the silver pin in her lip for a wooden one, a Javanese woman burns her dolls, a Spartan bride had to give up going to public games, but in Korea, it is the man, not the bride, who does up his hair. Why all these changes? “Society,” Parsons writes, “modern and primitive, stamps marriage with extraneous features, insists on making of it a novelty, because society thereby controls it, or rather, through marriage thus artificialized, it controls sex.”³³

In two of her later books Parsons begins to explore why women are divided from men, developing a theory grounded in the universality of social convention and social categories. In *Fear and Conventionality* she argues that social conventions are a way of erecting barriers because of a universal fear of change, dread of novelty, and dislike of the unusual. “Sex is one of the two greatest sources of difference between its members society has to apprehend. It deals with the disturbing factor in its characteristically simple, unconscious way. It separates men and women as much as possible.” Thus “No Vedda may come in contact with any woman of his own age except his wife. . . . Korean boys were taught that it was shameful to set foot at all in the women’s part of the house.”³⁴ And in New York a woman has her escort ride with the cab driver since there is no chaperone to watch over them if they share the same seat.

The possibility of breaking through rigid social categories is explored in *Social Freedom*, published in 1915. Sex, along with age, kinship, and caste, is the major social classification that sets up rigid divisions, against which, with a “maturing culture,” there is some attempt to struggle. “Freedom from the domination of personality by sex is the gift *par excellence* of feminism, a gift it brings to men as well as women.” Parsons believed that sex relationships were beginning to change. Under increased freedom from rigid social categories, “Sex becomes a factor in the enrich-

ment of personality. . . . It is a factor, not an obsession. . . . No longer a source of distress or annoyance, it is not kept separate from life nor repressed into the obscene. It is free to express itself, developing its own tests, standards and ideas. According to these ideals, relations between men and women will be primarily personal relations, secondarily sexual.”³⁵

Parsons was also a pacifist, and she opposed U.S. participation in World War I. She was against her husband's enlistment and refused to let anyone wearing a uniform into her home—including Herbert. She was disillusioned when many of the intellectuals associated with the *New Republic* began to support the war in 1917. Rosenberg argues that Parsons's hopes for progress and reform were dashed by World War I: “At the war's end, Parsons made a final break with public life and her own brand of feminism and escaped into anthropological fieldwork. Her friend Kroeber later suggested that she burned out on reform and that her growing understanding of culture's power over the individual made her even less optimistic about individual action.”³⁶

The Twenties: Parsons's Presidency of the AES and the Boasian Legacy

The twenties, as James Clifford has shown, were the years in which classic ethnography was formulated, as exemplified by Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* and Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*.³⁷ However, Parsons's fieldwork was much different from that of Malinowski and Mead. In the 1920s Parsons stayed with the Boasian tradition, which represented a more polyphonic description, but she framed that description in terms of culture elements, diffusion, and culture history. She remained aligned with Boas and Goddard and became a mentor to Gladys Reichard, who was almost a “daughter to Boas” and who, intellectually, remained a Boasian throughout her life. Parsons was never close to Mead, Benedict, or Sapir, the anthropologists in the Columbia milieu who were theorizing about the relationship between culture and the individual and were writing from a more humanistic point of view.³⁸

During the 1920s Parsons continued to make short trips to the Southwest, expanding her research outward from Zuni, visiting Laguna in 1919 and 1920, Hopi in 1920, Jemez in 1921, and Taos in 1922.³⁹ In the mid 1920s, when she was president of AES, she conducted research on the Tewa, working out of the Spanish village of Alcalde and having informants visit her there.⁴⁰

Given Pueblo resistance to researchers, especially those who wanted to know about religion, information was always obtained piecemeal. Anthropologists were never able to present a “seamless whole”; nor could they have “pitched their tents among the natives.” Parsons, like others of the period, relied primarily on information from one family (the host) and from a small circle of paid informants. In more secretive pueblos like Isleta, notes were made during interviews in a hotel room or at a nearby Spanish village.⁴¹ This relatively clandestine research (although Parsons took care never to reveal the names of her informants) gives us (in the 1990s) the

sense that anthropologists were almost natives.”

Few southwestern researchers engaged the authority which claimed that “I was the native as co-observer answering the questions in the notes of previous anthropological observations.” Parsons, along with Gladys Reichard and others, was adding women's voices, along with their own.

During the 1920s Parsons continued to be committed to collecting ethnographic data in the Boasian mode. We see this style of writing in her ethnographer and gives voice to her informants in a series of articles on mothers and children (1924). These essays are a compendium of data that make in order to get pregnant, taboos (and the child), postpartum practices and native beliefs by including the accounts of a naming ceremony by a native informant. It includes Wana's medicine man's prayer in both Keres and English. The hostess did to have a boy child and give names to the child.⁴³ In contrast to these articles in the range of behavior: the disciplining of children loses its first tooth. There are fewer personal informants or as observed by Elsie) and derived from various informants at unstate-

These articles contrast markedly with *Fashioned Woman* and *Fear and Convention* of the sexes, on the exclusion of women from convention. Gone from these texts are a discussion about human nature or even a discussion of Convention and custom are recorded, but the straining nature and no theory accounting for the Zuni masked figures that are a theme of constraint and the control of behavior. But comparisons are limited to Parsons's own observations of an *a'Doshle* in order to convey a vivid sense that the behavior comment on the ways in which behavior

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for progress and reform were dashed by
made a final break with public life and her
into anthropological fieldwork. Her friend
out on reform and that her growing under-
individual made her even less optimistic about

the AES and the Boasian Legacy

wn, were the years in which classic ethnog-
Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western
Age in Samoa*.³⁷ However, Parsons's field-
linowski and Mead. In the 1920s Parsons
represented a more polyphonic descrip-
terms of culture elements, diffusion, and
Boas and Goddard and became a mentor
daughter to Boas" and who, intellectually,
Parsons was never close to Mead, Benedict,
dia milieu who were theorizing about the
individual and were writing from a more

to make short trips to the Southwest,
ni, visiting Laguna in 1919 and 1920,
1922.³⁹ In the mid 1920s, when she was
in the Tewa, working out of the Spanish
it her there.⁴⁰

especially those who wanted to know
ained piecemeal. Anthropologists were
or could they have "pitched their tents
the period, relied primarily on informa-
small circle of paid informants. In more
e during interviews in a hotel room or
clandestine research (although Parsons
informants) gives us (in the 1990s) the

sense that anthropologists were almost "prying information, often secret, out of the
natives."

Few southwestern researchers engaged in writing with the kind of ethnographic
authority which claimed that "I was there, so you are there." Instead, a scholarly
article was often a blend of different voices—the anthropologist as observer, the
native as co-observer answering the anthropologist's questions "on the spot," the
notes of previous anthropological observations, and a narrative of a "prototypical"
ceremony by a native informant. Although male anthropologists used this style,
Parsons, along with Gladys Reichard and Ruth Underhill, were at the forefront in
adding women's voices, along with their own observations, to their texts.

During the 1920s Parsons continued to be interested in women, but she was
committed to collecting ethnographic detail that was written up in this polyphonic
Boasian mode. We see this style of writing, one that recognizes the position of the
ethnographer and gives voice to her informants, most vividly in Parsons's important
series of articles on mothers and children published in *Man* between 1919 and
1924. These essays are a compendium of beliefs and practices—offerings women
make in order to get pregnant, taboos surrounding birth (to avoid deformities in
the child), postpartum practices and naming ceremonies—and Parsons concretizes
these beliefs by including the accounts of individual women. For example, in the
article on "Mothers and Children at Laguna," Parsons gives her hostess Wana's
narrative of the naming ceremony used for her two-week-old baby (performed ten
days before her visit). It includes Wana's drawing of the altar and a text of the med-
icine man's prayer in both Keres and English.⁴² The Hopi article tells what Parsons's
hostess did to have a boy child and gives a verbatim account from her Tewa infor-
mant.⁴³ In contrast to these articles in which native voices emerge, several of the
articles on Zuni and the Tewa are more a list of taboos or sayings that describe a
range of behavior: the disciplining of children, or what a mother says when a child
loses its first tooth. There are fewer personal experiences here (either as narrated by
informants or as observed by Elsie) and more individual bits of information gather-
ed from various informants at unstated times and places.⁴⁴

These articles contrast markedly with Parsons's use of ethnography in *The Old-
Fashioned Woman* and *Fear and Conventionality*. They do not focus on the separa-
tion of the sexes, on the exclusion of women, or even on the constraints of
convention. Gone from these texts are attempts to moralize or point out a general-
ization about human nature or even an implicit contrast with our own culture.
Convention and custom are recorded, but there is little commentary on their con-
straining nature and no theory accounting for adherence to tradition. In one article,
on the Zuni masked figures that are used to terrorize and control children, the
theme of constraint and the control of behavior is still present in the selection of the
topic. But comparisons are limited to childrearing practices at other pueblos. Par-
sons's own observations of an *a'Doshle* "haranguing" a little boy are described in
order to convey a vivid sense that the boy was frightened, but there is no attempt to
comment on the ways in which behavior is constrained by the custom. No implicit

subtext judges Zuni practice or compares it to our own. The importance of individual freedom and the artificiality of social conventions are no longer issues in this "ethnographic" description.

When she was president of the AES, Parsons published two "landmark" essays, "Tewa Kin, Clan, and Moiety" and "The Religion of the Pueblo Indians."⁴⁵ The works arrange data on the Pueblo cultures from west to east, contrasting the matrilineal orientation of the Hopis with the weak clans at Keres and among the Tewa and the presence of the kachina cult and prayer-feather offerings in the western pueblos—complexes that "diminish steadily" to the east and north.⁴⁶ These essays mark her commitment to Boasian issues about cultural variation and diffusion and had a lasting impact on the field. The contrast between western and eastern pueblo social organization, for example, was more fully developed in the work of Fred Eggan.⁴⁷

After Parsons's last field trip to the Southwest, in 1932, she began to turn her attention elsewhere—to Mexico, the Caribbean, and Peru. In *Mitla: Town of the Souls* Parsons retains the polyphonic style she utilized in her articles during the 1920s as well as her interest in the position of women. Her chapter on family and personal life documents women's experiences in pregnancy and childbirth. In it we read about the town's midwives, Isadora and Señora Be'ta, their birthing techniques, the baths they give women after their children are born, and their remedies for delayed deliveries.⁴⁸ There is an account of one of the many marriage ceremonies Parsons attended, plus a lengthy discussion of sicknesses, cures, and difficulties with witchcraft. Here and in the remainder of the book we come to recognize a "cast of characters," many of whom recount stories of witchcraft or suggest cures that have been successful. Some are subjects of the portraits or participants in the narratives detailed in the chapter on town gossip. In that chapter Parsons relates her own experience in the earthquake of January 14, 1931, when she escaped from her room only moments before the ceiling collapsed.⁴⁹ This volume, like the ethnographies, fictionalized accounts, and life histories of Reichard and Underhill, constitutes the growing body of ethnography from a woman's point of view that blossomed during the 1930s, only to be forgotten in subsequent decades.⁵⁰

During this period Parsons's interest in the Southwest continued through her editing of Stephen's *Hopi Journal* and her most important southwestern book, *Pueblo Indian Religion*, published in 1939.⁵¹ In the latter the informants and observations of the earlier articles have disappeared, supplanted by a homogenous "ethnographic present" and an overriding concern with Boasian issues, particularly cultural innovation and borrowing. Each group—the Hopi, the Zuni, the Tewa—becomes an "absolute subject," to use Clifford's phrase. Parsons's voice becomes marginalized, relegated primarily to the footnotes. In this transformation of observation, narratives by informants, and the dialogues between ethnographer and native—in other words, data constituted in discursive, dialogical conditions—become textualized. "The data thus reformulated need no longer be understood as the communication of specific persons. An informant's explanation or description of custom need not be cast in a form that includes the message 'so and so said this.' A textualized

ritual or event is no longer closely linked to actors. Instead, these texts become evidence of reality."⁵² In *Pueblo Indian Religion* the observer disappears, and the historical becomes more difficult to find in the footnotes.

We have come to the end of a long period of feminism that sought to generalize about the position of ethnographic example with Western women. In the 1930s her prose, in which Babcock's ethnography, focused on ethnographic practice, contextualized observation, informant narratives, and individuals, and the question/answer format of many of her later publications exemplified, variability and culture contact are the focus. The observer and informant is erased and the subject dominates.

This assessment would be incomplete without mention of the financial contributions. Without Parsons's financial contributions. Without Parsons's Southwest research would have been a different one. In ample, she paid Ester Goldfrank's and Hilda Sabato in the early 1920s. She financed the research of White, and many others through the *Southern American Folklore* afloat and funded the study of cultural variability and of the influence of the Southwest. owes much to Parsons's research.

However, Parsons, like almost all of the women of the 1920s, never held a position within academia to do fieldwork and fund the research of others. She was an ethnologist rather than one who could shape the field. Yet Parsons was hardly alone in this. Gladys Reichard had a full-time position in anthropology. Ruth Benedict was denied the position in the Anthropology Department and did not stay; Margaret Mead was peripheral at the University of Chicago. The American Museum of Natural History had a number of women in archaeology and in anthropology. Ellis held a full-time position in the 1920s at the University of New Mexico.

Parsons touched the lives of most of the women of the 1920s, providing funds for their jobs or field research. Her role as a source of intellectual support was often hidden behind that of Boas, whose leadership was continually affirmed by historians of anthropology.

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Parsons published two "landmark" essays, "The Religion of the Pueblo Indians."⁴⁵ The first moves from west to east, contrasting the matrilineal weak clans at Keres and among the Tewa with the prayer-feather offerings in the western pueblos to the east and north.⁴⁶ These essays mark a shift in cultural variation and diffusion and had a profound influence between western and eastern pueblo social structures fully developed in the work of Fred Eggan.⁴⁷ In the Southwest, in 1932, she began to turn her attention to the Caribbean, and Peru. In *Mitla: Town of the* style she utilized in her articles during the 1930s, she focused on the condition of women. Her chapter on family and social differences in pregnancy and childbirth. In it we find the stories of Doña Be'ta and Señora Be'ta, their birthing techniques, and their remedies for their children are born, and their remedies for the ailments of one of the many marriage ceremonies. The book we come to recognize a "cast of shadows" of witchcraft or suggest cures that have been depicted in portraits or participants in the narratives. In that chapter Parsons relates her own experience in 1931, when she escaped from her room in the Southwest continued through her most important southwestern book, *Southwest*.⁴⁹ This volume, like the ethnographies of Reichard and Underhill, constitutes the dominant man's point of view that blossomed during the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁰

In the Southwest continued through her most important southwestern book, *Southwest*.⁵¹ In the latter the informants and observers, supplanted by a homogenous "ethnography" with Boasian issues, particularly cultural change. Parsons's voice becomes marginal. In this transformation of observation, the relationship between ethnographer and native—into a dialogical conditions—become textualized. Parsons's work can no longer be understood as the communication of a description of custom need to be explained 'so and so said this.' A textualized

ritual or event is no longer closely linked to the production of that event by specific actors. Instead, these texts become evidences of an englobing context, a 'cultural reality.'⁵² In *Pueblo Indian Religion* the multiple voices and the person of Parsons as observer disappear, and the historical specificity of differing accounts is even more difficult to find in the footnotes.

We have come to the end of a long process. First, Parsons's writing embodied a feminism that sought to generalize about women's situations based on a juxtaposition of ethnographic example with Western custom. During the 1920s and into the 1930s her prose, in which Babcock sees the prefiguring of "poststructuralist" ethnography, focused on ethnographic particulars and incorporated a pastiche of contextualized observation, informant narration, descriptive vignettes concerning individuals, and the question/answer interrogation of consultants.⁵³ And finally, many of her later publications exemplified a synthetic ethnology—one in which variability and culture contact are the theme but in which the dialogue between observer and informant is erased and the framework of Boasian culture history dominates.

This assessment would be incomplete if it did not emphasize Parsons's important financial contributions. Without Parsons's support, American anthropology and Southwest research would have been a much more piecemeal endeavor. For example, she paid Ester Goldfrank's and Ruth Bunzel's salaries as Boas's secretaries in the early 1920s. She financed the research of Benedict, Bunzel, Reichard, Leslie White, and many others through the Southwest Society. She kept the *Journal of American Folklore* afloat and funded numerous other publications. Our sense of cultural variability and of the influence of the Spanish Conquest among the Pueblos owes much to Parsons's research.

However, Parsons, like almost all of the other women in anthropology in the 1920s, never held a position within academe. Her wealth allowed her to travel and do fieldwork and fund the research of others; she remained a patron of anthropology rather than one who could shape its future through the direct training of students. Yet Parsons was hardly alone in her peripheral institutional position within anthropology. Gladys Reichard had a full-time position—but at an undergraduate college. Ruth Benedict was denied the position of chair of the Columbia University Anthropology Department and did not become a full professor until the year she died; Margaret Mead was peripheral at Columbia, shunted off to her tower office in the American Museum of Natural History. Even in the West, where there were a number of women in archaeology and in museum positions, only Florence Hawley Ellis held a full-time position in the 1920s or 1930s in the anthropology department at the University of New Mexico.

Parsons touched the lives of most of the women around Boas, whether by providing funds for their jobs or field research or by mentoring their anthropological work. Her role as a source of intellectual energy and financial support has been hidden behind that of Boas, whose leadership and institutional place have been continually affirmed by historians of anthropology. Only recently has Parsons's role

reemerged, through the work of women scholars.⁵⁴ Though there were cleavages (between those who remained more in the Boasian mold and those whose work fostered the emergence of the study of culture and personality), Parsons was key to the maintenance of the strong network of relations among women anthropologists at Columbia that flourished in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet for the most part Parsons's feminism remained a muted part of her ethnological writing, and the marginal positions of these women within anthropology limited their impact on the next generation of anthropologists.

The Reemergence of Feminism in the 1970s

When feminism reemerged in the 1970s as a political movement, it contained a critique of women's domestic roles that was reminiscent of the issues about which Parsons wrote: sexuality, marriage, motherhood, and the exclusion of women from the wider political sphere. Like Parsons in the teens, many of us were participating in several overlapping intellectual circles: consciousness-raising groups that probed the sexual politics of our personal lives and the history of the women's movement in America, antiwar-movement activities ranging from marches to study groups and conferences, and intellectual inquiry within the context of traditional departments and professional meetings. Many of these activities and the groups associated with them were centered on universities, but some feminists participated in women's health collectives and political organizations that had a community base.

For those of us who were instructors and assistant professors in universities it seemed important to put together our feminism and our academic interests. We set out to correct the "relative invisibility" of women and their treatment as "passive sexual objects, devoted mothers, and dutiful wives" by constructing courses on women in each of our disciplines.

Shelly Rosaldo, Jane Collier, and others taught one such course in anthropology at Stanford University in early 1971, and I taught one at Brown University in 1973. Simultaneously, women anthropologists were beginning to give scholarly papers on women's roles in areas of their own research. Our book, *Woman, Culture and Society*, emerged from the Stanford course, from papers delivered at the 1971 meeting of the American Anthropological Association in New York, and from our own network of female anthropologists.

My correspondence with Shelly Rosaldo between 1971 and 1973 reflects the way in which the framework and tone of *Woman, Culture and Society* evolved. Our initial impulse was to correct the male bias in anthropological writing by analyzing the viewpoint of women, to define the position of women in our own and other cultures, and to delineate the ways in which women are actors even in situations of subordination. The outline of our book we presented to publishers was one that examined women using a variety of topics: socialization and the family; women in the economy; women in society; politics and kinship; and beliefs, ideology, and symbolic culture.

Not until Rosaldo drafted the introduction began to shape the collection. Plutner's articles at the front of the book, including an attempt to give the book a theoretical framework, "Structure and Feminine Personality" had been in the "Family" section, and Ortner's article "Is It Had Been in the 'Beliefs, Ideology and Symbolism' section of the book. Ortner's piece was moved forward, but the introduction were never completed. In the end we divided the book into topical sections; instead, we grouped the essays into topical sections.

Pushing forward with the universal approach, we decided to do a book that would make a theoretical framework of three essays made broad ethnographic studies. The tone of *The Old-Fashioned Woman, Feudalism, and the Family* documenting subordination, both Rosaldo and I had been in the "Beliefs, Ideology and Symbolism" section by Parsons—exclusion, the taboos surrounding sexual separation. They often juxtaposed cultural examples.

Several passages written by Rosaldo and I, and constraint as Parsons's passages were, were cultural expressions of sexual asymmetry, as in the case of Tchambuli (both studied by Margaret Mead). Among the Arapesh, she said,

A wife was felt to be a "daughter" to her husband. . . . In a dominant male ritual . . . she was required to be obedient. . . . Women may control a good part of the trade in distant and important markets, yet they must feign ignorance and obedience. . . . Even the Iroquois . . . were not ruled by their husbands. . . . Instate and depose their rulers, but Iroquois men are not ruled by their wives.

In Rosaldo's view this asymmetry could be seen in the opposition between a domestic sphere associated with women and a public sphere associated with men. This had consequences for the association of men with achievement and the association of women with subordination. Rosaldo drew parallels between Tuareg men and women as they distance themselves from women and men.

Tuareg men have adopted the practice of covering their mouth. . . . high status men wear the veil; women have no veils; and to allow a man to permit his lover to see his mouth. (In the Tuareg culture that men wear their veil of a newspaper to cover their wives).⁵⁶

en scholars.⁵⁴ Though there were cleavages between the Boasian mold and those whose work focused on culture and personality, Parsons was key to the relations among women anthropologists at the time and 1930s. Yet for the most part Parsons's ethnological writing, and the marginal position of women, limited their impact on the next generation.

The 1970s

The 1970s as a political movement, it contained a feminism that was reminiscent of the issues about which women's liberation, and the exclusion of women from anthropology in the teens, many of us were participating in consciousness-raising groups that probed the history of the women's movement in anthropology, ranging from marches to study groups and conferences within the context of traditional departments and the groups associated with the activities and the groups associated with some feminists participated in women's organizations that had a community base.

As an assistant professor in universities it was feminism and our academic interests. We set out to study women and their treatment as "passive and obedient wives" by constructing courses on

I taught one such course in anthropology at Brown University in 1973. We were beginning to give scholarly papers on women's work. Our book, *Woman, Culture and Society*, was a collection of papers delivered at the 1971 meeting in New York, and from our own net-

work done between 1971 and 1973 reflects the evolution of *Woman, Culture and Society*. Our approach in anthropological writing by analyzing the position of women in our own and other cultures. Women are actors even in situations of oppression. The response presented to publishers was one that focused on socialization and the family; women in the context of kinship; and beliefs, ideology, and

Not until Rosaldo drafted the introduction did the theme of universal subordination begin to shape the collection. Placing Nancy Chodorow's and Sherry Ortner's articles at the front of the book, immediately after her own article, was part of an attempt to give the book a theoretical coherence. Chodorow's article "Family Structure and Feminine Personality" had initially been in the "Socialization and Family" section, and Ortner's article "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" had been in the "Beliefs, Ideology and Symbolic Culture" portion, at the end of the book. Ortner's piece was moved forward partly because other articles in that section were never completed. In the end we gave up the idea of organizing the book into topical sections; instead, we grouped papers that complemented each other.

Pushing forward with the universal asymmetry theme and becoming committed to a book that would make a theoretical contribution meant that the introductory three essays made broad ethnographic comparisons. They echo the generalizing tone of *The Old-Fashioned Woman, Fear and Conventionality*, and *Social Rule*. In documenting subordination, both Rosaldo and Ortner focused on many issues cited by Parsons—exclusion, the taboos surrounding menstruation and childbirth, and sexual separation. They often juxtaposed examples from their society and cross-cultural examples.

Several passages written by Rosaldo contain the same emphasis on exclusion and constraint as Parsons's passages quoted above. For example, in discussing cultural expressions of sexual asymmetry, Rosaldo contrasted the Arapesh and the Tchambuli (both studied by Margaret Mead) with the Yoruba and the Iroquois. Among the Arapesh, she said,

*A wife was felt to be a "daughter" to her husband, and at the time of the dominant male ritual . . . she was required to act like an ignorant child. . . . Yoruba women may control a good part of the food supply, accumulate cash and trade in distant and important markets, yet when approaching their husbands, wives must feign ignorance and obedience, kneeling to serve the men as they sit. . . . Even the Iroquois . . . were not ruled by women; there, powerful women might instate and depose their rulers, but Iroquois chiefs were men.*⁵⁵

In Rosaldo's view this asymmetry could best be explained by a social-structural opposition between a domestic sphere associated with women and a public sphere associated with men. This had consequences for the establishment of male authority and the association of men with achieved status. In making her point about authority Rosaldo drew parallels between Tuareg and American men in the ways in which they distance themselves from women and hence create authority:

*Tuareg men have adopted the practice of wearing a veil across the nose and mouth. . . . high status men wear their veils more strictly than do slaves or vassals; women have no veils; and to assure his distance, no man is supposed to permit his lover to see his mouth. (In parts of American society, it would seem that men wear their veil of a newspaper in the subways and at breakfast with their wives).*⁵⁶

Ortner's argument for universal asymmetry resorted less often to ethnographic example, but she detailed the case of the Crow to support her three criteria for subordination: explicit devaluing of women; implicit statements of inferiority, such as the attribution of defilement through symbolic devices; and social-structural arrangements that excluded women from contact with the highest powers of society.

In sum, the Crow are probably a fairly typical case. Yes, women have certain powers and rights, in this case some that place them in fairly high positions. Yet ultimately the line is drawn: menstruation is a threat to warfare, one of the most valued institutions of the tribe, one that is central to their self-definition; and the most sacred object of the tribe [the Sun Dance doll] is taboo to the direct sight and touch of women.⁵⁷

Ortner's explanation for women's subordination was rooted in the association of men with culture that is highly valued, while women are universally seen as closer to nature and hence to be devalued.

Parsons's writing echoes clearly in these articles. Not only am I struck by the same generalizing tone and the use of ethnographic example to bolster an argument about human universals, but Rosaldo and Ortner focus on many of the same issues—taboos, constraints, and exclusionary practices—often centering on women's bodies, their sexuality, and their reproductive roles as mothers.

Although the first three articles of *Woman, Culture and Society* generated a great deal of controversy, they did represent a coherent theoretical position. Unlike Elsie Clews Parsons's eclectic ethnological examples, underlain by a gesture toward a human propensity for boundaries, conventions, and constraints, our earlier theories assumed a framework that differentiated cultural, sociological, and psychological levels of explanation. For Rosaldo, Ortner, and Chodorow, woman's role as mother played a central role in the explanation of universal asymmetry. Theoretical dichotomies like domestic/public and nature/culture helped to make sense of women's roles at an analytical level absent from Parsons's work. Those who were influenced by materialism had a clear sense of how to build a framework that suggested an economic explanation for social and cultural phenomena. Here Karen Sacks's reworking of Engels's theory and Rayna Reiter's analysis of the historical creation of domestic and public spheres in France are the best examples.⁵⁸ We were the inheritors of the integration of the work of Durkheim, Weber, and Marx into sociology and anthropology—an integration that had not yet shaped the sociology and anthropology of Parsons's day.

Conclusions

The contrast between Parsons's feminism and her ethnology and that of recent feminist anthropologists is partly an intellectual one. Boasian ethnography allowed a pastiche of observation, interrogation, and native accounts. Yet the framework

into which Parsons put her data was one and to processes of diffusion and bo younger generation of anthropologists culture, Parsons remained in the Boasian

The 1960s generation of female anthropologists had incorporated sociology—the intellectual heim. Culture, social structure, and psychology in Talcott Parsons's synthesis, which in and those who taught social theory at Harvard which social structure (derived from Freud) was widely read. And the implicit impact of Freud's work, which shaped the training of graduate students. More recently, postmodernism, particularly Lacan, and Jacques Derrida, has taken up these theorists set the tone for a synthesis of these approaches.

But feminist anthropology in the 1960s was just as Parsons's views had been shaped by pacifism in the teens. Women did make a difference in elite students and had an impact on the curriculum on some issues. However, suffrage and feminism in the academy, especially during the pre-1960s, the proper education of women never required need for more research on women per se. They did not have a secure place in coeducational universities or tenured professorships in the elite universities.

In contrast, the 1960s brought a reevaluation of programs, and the number of young female anthropologists in the early 1970s. We were in a better position, though knocking down these barriers had been the Title VII suit against Brown University.

Equally, if not more important, are the changes since Vietnam War in shaping feminist anthropology. World War I was broken through suffrage in the World, the Communist scare, and restlessness contributed to *The Masses* retired to the United States movements in the 1920s. Finally, the United States to a postwar era very different from the 1920s. Vietnam had relatively little popular support, which grew at the same time as participation in gay- and lesbian-rights movements increased support from students and some academics. This material on these disenfranchised groups

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into which Parsons put her data was one that gave primacy to the culture element
and to processes of diffusion and borrowing. While Mead and Benedict—the
younger generation of anthropologists—were differentiating the individual from
culture, Parsons remained in the Boasian mold.

The 1960s generation of female anthropologists learned an anthropology that
had incorporated sociology—the intellectual heritage of Marx, Weber, and Durk-
heim. Culture, social structure, and psychology were differentiated levels of analysis
in Talcott Parsons's synthesis, which influenced Clifford Geertz, David Schneider,
and those who taught social theory at Harvard University. British anthropology, in
which social structure (derived from Durkheim) was the organizing tool, was
widely read. And the implicit impact of Marx was filtered through Leslie White's
work, which shaped the training of graduate students at the University of Michigan.
More recently, postmodernism, particularly the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques
Lacan, and Jacques Derrida, has taken us to a new stage, one in which French male
theorists set the tone for a synthesis of cultural, social, and political-economy
approaches.

But feminist anthropology in the 1970s was also shaped by social movements,
just as Parsons's views had been shaped by progressive reform, feminism, and
pacifism in the teens. Women did make inroads into the major universities as gradu-
ate students and had an impact on the way in which the social sciences dealt with
some issues. However, suffrage and feminist progressive reform were peripheral to
the academy, especially during the pre-World War I years. Feminist debates over
the proper education of women never reformed the curriculum or focused on the
need for more research on women per se. As I have emphasized, women themselves
did not have a secure place in coeducational institutions, and they were not granted
tenured professorships in the elite universities.

In contrast, the 1960s brought a refeminization of anthropology graduate pro-
grams, and the number of young female Ph.D.'s on the job market had increased by
the early 1970s. We were in a better position to take jobs at elite institutions,
though knocking down these barriers has been a struggle, as I know from my own
Title VII suit against Brown University.

Equally, if not more important, are the differences between World War I and the
Vietnam War in shaping feminist anthropology. The antiwar movement during
World War I was broken through suppression of the Industrial Workers of the
World, the Communist scare, and restrictions on immigration. The radicals who
contributed to *The Masses* retired to private life and abandoned social-reform
movements in the 1920s. Finally, the United States won World War I, contributing
to a postwar era very different from the one that followed the Vietnam War. Viet-
nam had relatively little popular support and spawned a radical student movement
which grew at the same time as participation in the minority-rights, feminist, and
gay- and lesbian-rights movements increased. These movements had important sup-
port from students and some academics, who pushed to reform curricula to include
material on these disenfranchised groups.

Despite the rightward movement of the United States in the 1980s, universities, much to dismay of the right wing, have remained havens for diverse scholarship. Even though students have turned to computer sciences, accounting, and engineering in many schools, women's studies and ethnic studies have survived, now with the support of sympathetic minority and female administrators.

These differences, both intellectual and political, have allowed feminist anthropology to establish a more central position within anthropology in general, as the Gender and Curriculum Project and the growing Association for Feminist Anthropology as a section within the American Anthropological Association indicate.⁵⁹ The outpouring of scholarship on women will continue to bring feminism to the center of anthropology in a way in which Elsie Clews Parsons—given the intellectual and political constraints of her time—could not. This would reclaim the feminist heritage of Elsie Clews Parsons for anthropology—a fitting task for the next few decades of scholarship and research.

Notes

This is a revised version of the 1989 AES Distinguished Lecture (originally published in the *American Ethnologist* 16 [1989]: 518–33). I would like to thank Henry Rutz, organizer of the 1989 AES Meetings, held in Santa Fe April 5–9, and the AES Board for inviting me to speak. In making the revisions for this book, I have taken advantage of a wealth of new scholarship on Parsons by Barbara Babcock, Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, and Desley Deacon. I have been particularly influenced by Barbara Babcock's introduction to *Pueblo Mothers and Children*, which explores the feminist aspects of Parsons's work during the 1920s in the Southwest and argues that throughout Parsons's life there was an interest in understanding "the relation between social formations and female subjectivity—in particular the cultural construction of gender and sexuality and reproduction, the sexual division of labor and the subjugation of women" (Introduction to *Pueblo Mothers and Children: Essays by Elsie Clews Parsons, 1915–1924* [Santa Fe, N.M.: Ancient City Press, 1991], 18). I would also like to thank my colleague Marta Weigle for her helpful comments on an early draft of this paper.

1. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987).
2. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Publications in Anthropology, 1939).
3. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).
4. Louis A. Hieb, "Elsie Clews Parsons in the Southwest," in *Hidden Scholars: Women Anthropologists and the Native American Southwest*, ed. Nancy J. Parezo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 63–75; Barbara A. Babcock and Nancy J. Parezo, *Daughters of the Desert: Women Anthropologists and the Native American Southwest, 1880–1980* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988).
5. Louise Lamphere, "Gladys Reichard among the Navajo," in *Hidden Scholars*, 157–88.
6. Barbara A. Babcock, "Not Yet Classified, Perhaps Unclassifiable: Elsie Clews Parsons, Feminist/Anthropologist" (Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association Meeting, Phoenix, Ariz., November 1988), and "Elsie Clews Parsons and the Pueblo Construction of Gender," in *Pueblo Mothers and Children*, 1–23.
7. Peter Hare, *A Woman's Quest for Science: Portrait of Anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1985), 27.

8. Elsie Clews Parsons, *The Family* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 10.
9. Hare, *A Woman's Quest for Science*, 33.
10. *Ibid.*, 14.
11. *Ibid.*, 135.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Cott, *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 3.
14. *Ibid.*, 37.
15. Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 168.
16. *Ibid.*, 168.
17. Desley Deacon, "The Republic of Spirit: Elsie Clews Parsons and the Birth of Feminist Anthropology," *Frontiers* 12, no. 3 (1991): 10–15.
18. Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, *Wealth and Power: Elsie Clews Parsons and the Pueblo Construction of Gender* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 10.
19. Alfred Kroeber, "Elsie Clews Parsons," *American Anthropologist* 20 (1918): 168–73.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Elsie Clews Parsons, "Note on Navajo Women," *American Anthropologist* 18 (1916): 465–67.
22. Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion*, 176–77.
23. Elsie Clews Parsons, "A Few Zuni Deaths," *Man* 18 (1916): 245–56; "The Zuñi A'Dos," *Man* 18 (1916): 338–47; "The Zuñi La'mana," *Man* 18 (1916): 338–47; "Mothers and Children at Laguna," *Man* 19 (1919): 168–73.
24. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 168.
25. Judy Schwarz, *Radical Feminists of the 1970s* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).
26. Florence Guy Woolston, "Marriage Customs among the Pueblo Indians," *Scientific Monthly*, November 1919.
27. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 176.
28. Elsie Clews Parsons, *The Old-Fashioned Woman* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913); *Religion and the Pueblo Indians* (New York: Macauley, 1913); *Fear and Convention: A Study of the Conflict between Social Freedom and the Pueblo Indians* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916); *The Pueblo Construction of Gender* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916).
29. Parsons, *The Old-Fashioned Woman*, 97.
30. *Ibid.*, 97.
31. *Ibid.*, 192–202, 275, 296–97.
32. Barbara Babcock argues that Parsons's cultural critique and is "neither as evolutionary nor as biographical as the biographers and biographers have implied. Her early work was for their challenge to the idea of cultural evolution but also for her repeated questioning of the idea of evolution" (Babcock, "Elsie Clews Parsons," 19).

the United States in the 1980s, universities, remained havens for diverse scholarship. Computer sciences, accounting, and engineering and ethnic studies have survived, now with female administrators. and political, have allowed feminist anthropology within anthropology in general, as the growing Association for Feminist Anthropology and Anthropological Association indicate.⁵⁹ Women will continue to bring feminism to the field with Elsie Clews Parsons—given the intellectual work she could not. This would reclaim the feminist anthropology—a fitting task for the next

distinguished Lecture (originally published in the 1970s). I would like to thank Henry Rutz, organizer of the 1991 meeting, and the AES Board for inviting me to speak. I have taken advantage of a wealth of new scholarship on Elsie Clews Parsons, and Desley Deacon. I have been introduced to *Pueblo Mothers and Children*, Elsie Clews Parsons's work during the 1920s in the Southwest and her interest in understanding "the relation between the sexes—in particular the cultural construction of the sexual division of labor and the subjugation of women." *Mothers and Children: Essays by Elsie Clews Parsons*, ed. Nancy J. Parezo (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), 18. I would also like to thank my colleagues for comments on an early draft of this paper.

Modern Feminism (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

"The Southwest," in *Hidden Scholars: Women in the Southwest*, ed. Nancy J. Parezo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 63–75; Barbara A. Babcock and Nancy J. Parezo, *Women Anthropologists and the Native American Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988).

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8. Elsie Clews Parsons, *The Family* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906).
9. Hare, *A Woman's Quest for Science*, 33–34.
10. *Ibid.*, 14.
11. *Ibid.*, 135.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Cott, *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 35.
14. *Ibid.*, 37.
15. Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 166.
16. *Ibid.*, 168.
17. Desley Deacon, "The Republic of Spirit: Fieldwork in Elsie Clews Parsons's Turn to Anthropology," *Frontiers* 12, no. 3 (1991): 24.
18. Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion: Elsie Clews Parsons, Anthropologist and Folklorist* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 172.
19. Alfred Kroeber, "Elsie Clews Parsons," *American Anthropologist* 45 (1943): 253.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Elsie Clews Parsons, "Note on Navajo War Dance," *American Anthropologist* 21 (1919): 465–67.
22. Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion*, 176–79, 236–38.
23. Elsie Clews Parsons, "A Few Zuni Death Beliefs and Practices," *American Anthropologist* 18 (1916): 245–56; "The Zuñi A'Doshlei and Suuke," *American Anthropologist* 18 (1916): 338–47; "The Zuñi La'mana," *American Anthropologist* 18 (1916): 521–28; "Mothers and Children at Laguna," *Man* 19 (1919): 34–38; and "Mothers and Children at Zuñi," *Man* 19 (1919): 168–73.
24. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 168.
25. Judy Schwarz, *Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy* (Lebanon, N.H.: New Victoria Publishers, 1982).
26. Florence Guy Woolston, "Marriage Customs and Taboo among the Early Heterodities," *Scientific Monthly*, November 1919.
27. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 170–71.
28. Elsie Clews Parsons, *The Old-Fashioned Woman: Primitive Fancies about the Sex* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913); *Religious Chastity: An Ethnological Study* (New York: Macauley, 1913); *Fear and Conventionality* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914); *Social Freedom: A Study of the Conflicts between Social Classifications and Personality* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916); *Social Rule: A Study of the Will to Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916).
29. Parsons, *The Old-Fashioned Woman*, 91–92.
30. *Ibid.*, 97.
31. *Ibid.*, 192–202, 275, 296–97.
32. Barbara Babcock argues that Parsons's writing in this period constitutes a feminist cultural critique and is "neither as evolutionary nor as universalizing as many of her critics and biographers have implied. Her early feminist sociology texts bear rereading not only for their challenge to the idea of cultural evolution and insistence on cultural relativism but also for her repeated questioning of 'the social need for women's subordination'" (Babcock, "Elsie Clews Parsons," 19).

33. Elsie Clews Parsons, "Marriage: A New Life," *Masses* 8 (September 1916): 27.
34. Parsons, *Fear and Conventionality*, 119-20.
35. Parsons, *Social Freedom*, 36.
36. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 176.
37. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1984, originally published 1921); Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (New York: Morrow, 1928).
38. Although Benedict took her first anthropology course from Parsons at the New School in 1919, Margaret M. Caffrey (*Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989], 96) suggests that Parsons's inductive approach to anthropology was different from the deductive thinking that came much more naturally to Benedict. She was Parsons's research assistant for several years during the 1920s, working on a concordance of Southwest mythology, but Caffrey (pp. 156, 226-27) concluded that although Parsons was a supporter of Benedict, she was not a close personal friend, not someone who admired and supported Benedict's work on the Pueblos as it developed during the 1920s and 1930s.
39. Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion*, 233-40.
40. Hieb, "Elsie Clews Parsons," 9-13.
41. Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion*, 240-43.
42. Parsons, "Mothers and Children at Laguna."
43. Elsie Clews Parsons, "Hopi Mothers and Children," *Man* 21 (1921): 98-104.
44. Parsons, "Mothers and Children at Zuñi"; and "Tewa Kin, Clan, and Moiety," *American Anthropologist* 26 (1924): 333-39.
45. Parsons, "Tewa Kin, Clan, and Moiety"; "The Religion of the Pueblo Indians," *Proceedings, Twenty-First International Congress of Americanists*, 1925.
46. Parsons, "Tewa Kin, Clan, and Moiety," 339; and "Religion of the Pueblo Indians," 140.
47. Fred Eggan, *The Social Organization of the Western Pueblos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).
48. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Mitla, Town of the Souls and Other Zapoteco-Speaking Pueblos of Oaxaca, Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), 74-79.
49. *Ibid.*, 463.
50. Gladys Reichard, *Spider Woman: A Story of Navajo Weavers and Chanters* (New York: MacMillan, 1934) and *Dezba: Woman of the Desert* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1938); Ruth M. Underhill, *Papago Woman* (American Anthropological Association Memoir 46; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1936).
51. Elsie Clews Parsons, ed., *Hopi Journal of Alexander M. Stephen* (Columbia University Contributions in Anthropology 23; New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).
52. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 39.
53. Babcock, "Elsie Clews Parsons," 16.
54. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*; Judith Friedlander, "Elsie Clews Parsons," in *Women Anthropologists: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Ute Gacs, Aisha Khan, Jerrie McIntyre, and Ruth Weinberg (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988), 282-90; Babcock, "Not Yet Classified" and "Elsie Clews Parsons"; Deacon, "Republic of Spirit"; Zumwalt, *Wealth and Rebellion*.
55. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture and Society," 19-20.
56. *Ibid.*, 27.
57. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature to Culture?" 70.
58. Karen Brodtkin Sacks, "Engels Revisited: Private Property," in *Woman, Culture and Society*, in *Toward a New History of Women in the South of France*, in *Toward a New History of Women in the South of France* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).
59. Sandra Morgen, ed., *Gender and Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1978).

Life," *Masses* 8 (September 1916): 27.

20.

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21); Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*

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"The Religion of the Pueblo Indians," *Proceed-*
ings of Americanists, 1925.

39; and "Religion of the Pueblo Indians," 140.

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Pueblos and Other Zapoteco-Speaking Pueblos of
Chicago Press, 1936), 74-79.

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American Anthropological Association Memoir 46;
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Alexander M. Stephen (Columbia University
Press: Columbia University Press, 1936).

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University Press, 1988), 39.

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Elsie Clews Parsons"; Deacon, "Republic of Spirit";

55. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," in
Woman, Culture and Society, 19-20.

56. *Ibid.*, 27.

57. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture and Soci-*
ety, 70.

58. Karen Brodtkin Sacks, "Engels Revisited: Women, the Organization of Production and
Private Property," in *Woman, Culture and Society*, 207-22; Rayna Reiter, "Women and
Men in the South of France," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter
(New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 252-82.

59. Sandra Morgen, ed., *Gender and Anthropology: Critical Reviews for Research and*
Teaching (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1989).