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Theoretical inertia in American sociology: The plausibility of William F. Ogburn's hypothesis of "cultural lag"

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THEORETICAL INERTIA IN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY: THE PLAUSIBILITY OF WILLIAM F. OGBURN'S HYPOTHESIS OF "CULTURAL LAG"

by

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ABSTRACT

Sociologist William Fielding Ogburn's hypothesis of "cultural lag" was popular from the 1920's through the 1950's. The cultural lag hypothesis holds that an innovation in one part of culture, usually in science or technology, creates the need for adjustment in another part. The period between the innovation and subsequent adjustment is known as a cultural lag. Ogburn used lag analysis to explain a variety of problems in modern industrial society.

Although the lag concept was soundly criticized for its subjectivity, many intellectuals continued to regard it as a valid form of social analysis. This continued plausibility of "cultural lag" was due to its ability to express both historicist social critique and an image of objective social measurement. Ogburn's hypothesis thus fulfilled the desire of many social scientists to appear ideologically impartial while actually taking sides on many social issues. The decline of progressivist social theory, however, eventually exposed the theoretical weaknesses of "cultural lag" -- except for a brief revival of the concept which accompanied the advent of atomic power.
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INTRODUCTION:
A CASE OF THEORETICAL LAG

In 1960, a prominent sociologist reported that William Ogburn's hypothesis of "cultural lag" had, as it were, been dead for some time yet refused to lie down. Princeton University's Wilbert Moore was pleased to note that the lag idea had been discredited by Pitirim Sorokin and Robert MacIver during the early 1930's. What puzzled Moore was the continued acceptance of "cultural lag," at least among some thinkers, as a valid tool for scientific social analysis: "The persistence of the 'cultural lag' hypothesis and its variants in the face of Sorokin's devastating criticism (as well as criticisms from others) is itself an interesting example of resistance to change, or a 'lag' not explainable by the hypothesis." ¹ There was irony, in other words, in the fact that Ogburn's theory "lagged on" even after it had been subjected to thoroughgoing critical analysis. The following is an attempt to account for this case of theoretical inertia in American sociology.

William Fielding Ogburn (1886-1959) is often mentioned in connection with the well-known "Chicago school" of sociology. Although pride of place is invariably assigned to Robert E. Park and Ernest R. Burgess, Ogburn is usually ranked among the influential members of the Chicago department. ² His most original theoretical work, however, took place at Columbia University, where Ogburn studied under eminent sociologist Franklin H. Giddings. Ogburn received his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1912, and spent his first years of
teaching at Princeton, Reed College, and the University of Washington. He returned to teach at Barnard College and Columbia in 1919. Soon thereafter, Ogburn published his first, and most important, book, *Social Change: With Respect to Culture and Original Nature* (1922). In 1927, Ogburn was offered a professorship in sociology at the University of Chicago, where he remained until his retirement in 1951. Other posts held by William Ogburn also attest to his respectable status within the discipline of sociology. He was president of the American Sociological Society in 1929, and edited a series of annual symposia on "Recent Social Changes" for the *American Journal of Sociology* during the early 1930's. Perhaps his most prestigious position was as chairman of the Social Science Research Council from 1937 to 1939.

Among sociologists, Ogburn is often noted for his pioneering work in quantitative social investigation. As some have suggested, these original applications of statistics to social research may have been Ogburn's most significant long-range contribution to his discipline. It was at Ogburn's insistence that the University of Chicago's Social Science Building, which opened in 1929, should bear in stone a motto from British mathematician Lord Kelvin: "When you cannot measure, your knowledge is meager and unsatisfactory." Throughout his career, Ogburn conducted statistical investigations into specific topics including the family, cities, population, legislation and voting, war, and international relations. (As his student Otis Duncan warns, however, these works by Ogburn are "not to be
recommended for inspirational reading.") 7 Ogburn's application of statistical methods to social research led to several positions with the federal government under presidents Hoover and Roosevelt. The first of these was as head of the cost-of-living department of the National War Labor Board, 1918-1919. Ogburn also directed the Consumer's Advisory Board of the New Deal's National Recovery Administration in 1933. The most important of these government appointments was as research director for Recent Social Trends (1933), a study commissioned under the Hoover administration and intended as a resource for social and legislative reforms. With this record of service in mind, friend and former student Rexford G. Tugwell testified that Ogburn's "contributions to social science and his services to the public would make him one of most useful men of my generation..." Significantly, Tugwell added that "when he died in 1960 [sic], we were planning to do a joint book on social theory in our retirement." 8 Tugwell was apparently impressed with Ogburn's theoretical insights as well as his skill in quantitative research.

Ogburn indeed pursued a variety of theoretical interests, partly inspired by the interdisciplinary nature of his graduate training at Columbia. He studied economics extensively under Wesley C. Mitchell. He also took an early interest in Freudian psychology, and incorporated psychoanalytic themes in his teaching and in two of his early articles. As one-time student Margaret Mead recalled, Ogburn gave "one of the first courses in which Freudian psychology was treated with respect." 9 The most significant of these non-sociological
influences, however, was the new cultural anthropology pioneered by Franz Boas. Ogburn took courses under Boas, and later drew inspiration from Boas’s students Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowie. This anthropological tradition had a profound impact on Ogburn’s ideas about social change and "cultural lag."

Without question, Ogburn’s most significant contribution to sociological theory was his well-known hypothesis of cultural lag. Historians Warren Susman and Richard H. Pells have described the lag concept as one of the primary means by which American intellectuals interpreted their society during the 1920’s, 30’s, and 40’s. 10 Robert Crunden claims that the lag hypothesis "gave sociology one of its most important conceptual tools" during the interwar years. 11 These recent assessments of "cultural lag's" historical role echo earlier assessments made by Ogburn’s contemporaries. In 1936, the University of Wisconsin's Kimball Young claimed that "it is now generally accepted that many of our contemporary problems of society result from this lag in one part of our culture in the face of changes in another." 12 Sociologist John H. Mueller of Indiana University noted that "cultural lag" had enjoyed a popularity experienced by few other concepts, and compared its influence with that of William Graham Sumner’s "folkways" and "mores." 13 And, in 1951, Howard Odum remarked that the lag concept had become a "classic" in American sociology. 14

The cultural lag hypothesis is best understood in relation to Ogburn’s general theory of social change. The general theory included
four steps: invention, accumulation, diffusion, and adjustment -- only
the last of which concerned cultural lag per se. Invention meant the
introduction of new tools, behaviors, or knowledge to the social group.
Ogburn emphasized that inventions were not original creations, but
were improvements constructed from the previously-invented
materials (or "social heritage") possessed by a society. Accumulation
occurs when the number of new elements added to the cultural base
exceeds the number of cultural traits which are discarded through
disuse. The greater the amount of accumulation, the easier it is to
make new inventions. Diffusion meant the spread of an invention,
such as the hunting bow, from one tribe or geographic area to another.
This process can also be termed "borrowing," when viewed from the
angle of the receiving group.

Adjustment, the final factor in Ogburn's theory of social change,
was a major theme throughout Ogburn's writings. A large section of
his book Social Change is dedicated to "Social Maladjustment," and it
is these chapters which concern "cultural lag." According to the lag
hypothesis, an innovation in one part of culture creates the need for an
adjustment in another part. Because invention, accumulation, and
diffusion usually occur fastest in "material" (i.e., technological) culture,
the remaining "adaptive culture" tends to lag behind in development.
Ogburn called the period of time between a material invention and its
correlated social adjustment a "cultural lag." An example of lag is the
delay in establishing workman's compensation laws which followed the
emergence of dangerous factory work conditions.
This essay will focus primarily on the cultural lag hypothesis. It is difficult, however, to avoid dealing as well with Ogburn's general theory of socio-cultural change or evolution. Ogburn, for his part, often stressed the distinction between the two theories, as when he claimed that "the concept of cultural lag is not a fundamental part of the theory of social evolution." 15 He argued that the lag thesis explains the incidence of discrete social problems, but not the overall evolution of culture. Nevertheless, it is important to consider Ogburn's lag idea in the context of his social change theory. Although independent from a logical standpoint, "social change" and "cultural lag" are closely interrelated in Ogburn's writings. As we will see, the embeddedness of the lag thesis in Ogburn's technology-centered theory of social evolution gave fuel to both critics and defenders of "cultural lag."

Even though the lag concept was commonplace in the sociological literature for nearly four decades, and enjoyed wide application among a variety of social thinkers, "cultural lag" did not meet with unmixed acceptance. It was the target of "devastating" attacks during the 1930's, and began to fall into disfavor somewhat during the 1940's -- only to revive in the postwar years and survive into the 1950's. "Cultural lag," then, persisted in spite of criticisms which, as we read them today, certainly appear fatal to the hypothesis. In large part, the key to this tenacity lies in the tradition of nineteenth-century social thought which inspired Ogburn in formulating the lag idea. A combination of Marxism and social
evolutionist anthropological theory stood behind the lag concept -- and also supplied the progressivist orientation held by prominent early-twentieth-century thinkers such as John Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, and James Harvey Robinson. This broad evolutionist tradition provided social thinkers with 1) a historicist mode of social critique and 2) a progressivist ideal of social "adjustment" -- intellectual tools which, significantly, build up their users, even as they are used to analyze society.

Even more so than other varieties of this progressivist-historicist tradition, "cultural lag" had a built-in ability to enhance the authority of social scientists. As Ogburn often implied, only the trained scientific expert is able to identify and prescribe cures for lags. This subjective nature of "cultural lag" was, on one hand, a prime target for critics of the hypothesis, who charged that the unavoidable a priori definition of "maladjustment" will be tainted by the sociologist's personal biases. Paradoxically, however, the subjectivity of "cultural lag" was also what made it attractive to many sociologists -- given the fact that Ogburn's formulation of the theory made it appear as an empirical measure of social dysfunctions. A large part of this apparent "objectivity" derived from the term "lag" itself, which seemed to convert social analysis into a matter of mechanics rather than ethics. By using the lag concept, sociologists could comment persuasively on social issues, yet seemingly without compromising their scientific detachment. The lag hypothesis thus embodied progressivist reformism while masking its evaluative nature.
with the result that it promised to fulfill at once the desire of social
scientists for both advocacy and objectivity. 16

Part I of this essay deals with the genealogy and character of
Ogburn's social thought. The emphasis will be on the progressivist
and historicist sources of the cultural lag idea. Part II concerns the
development of Ogburn's thought, and the reactions to it, subsequent
to the publication of his first book in 1922. Priority will be placed on
accounting for the favorable reception accorded to the lag hypothesis
-- and for its plausibility in spite of the criticisms it received during
the 1930's and 40's.
CHAPTER 1
CULTURE, PROGRESS, AND MALADJUSTMENT
IN OGBURN'S EARLY WRITINGS

There were few gray areas or complexities in William Ogburn's social thought. Indeed, Ogburn's writings on culture repeatedly emphasized two simple ideas: progress and maladjustment. These two themes, moreover, were closely intertwined. "Maladjustment" meant unequal rates of progress, and resulted chiefly from the fact (as Ogburn observed it) that "material culture" advances faster than do social arrangements such as the economy, the government, or the family. Although he seldom actually used the word "progress," and preferred the term "social change," Ogburn always depicted history as dynamic and progressive. In this chapter, we will explore how Ogburn's stress on this dynamic quality of "culture" made possible both his general theory of social change and his hypothesis of "cultural lag."

Ogburn's Theory of Progressive Cultural Change

Ogburn's social thought was built around two fundamental dichotomies, which in turn supported his emphases on cultural progress and maladjustment. The first dichotomy was between culture and original (i.e., biological) nature -- as reflected in the title of his first book, Social Change: With Respect to Culture and Original Nature (1922). As this title suggests, Ogburn viewed social theory largely in terms of the nature-nurture controversy. Ogburn argued that, while culture changes through the centuries, the biological
nature of humanity evolves at a glacial rate. Cultural and biological evolution thus manifest vastly unequal rates of change. The second dichotomy that Ogburn stressed was within "culture" itself, the distinction between material and non-material culture. Here again, we see unequal rates of change, since material culture evolves much faster through the constant addition of new inventions and discoveries than does relatively static non-material culture. From the early 1920's onward, nearly everything that Ogburn wrote about social change stemmed from these basic distinctions.

Ogburn's general theory of social change was spun out of the primary dichotomy, between culture and original (biological) nature. For Ogburn, there was no middle ground between culture and heredity. He claimed, for example, that "a group of new-born infants on an island uninhabited by man would be without a social heritage [i.e., culture]" -- although they would have both biological heredity and a natural environment. ¹ Ogburn often applied this strict separation of culture and original nature in comments on social psychology. Social psychologists, such as Ogburn's mentor, Franklin H. Giddings, emphasized that society -- and social change -- emerge from the psychological interaction of individuals. As Ogburn pointed out, these thinkers tended to describe society in purely psychological terms, "such as sociability, gregariousness, association, response to stimuli and consciousness of kind, and not in cultural terms." ²

These psychological mechanisms, however, according to Ogburn, were a manifestation of static "original nature." Ogburn thus
denied that they could explain cultural change. Rather than focus on psychological mechanisms, Ogburn stressed the "social heritage," which "is not solely the product of human association occurring at a particular period . . . but is a certain surviving product over a very long period of time."³ Ogburn defined the social heritage (a term he used nearly interchangeably with "culture") as "the accumulated products of human society [which] . . . includes the use of material objects as well as social institutions and social ways of doing things. Hence cultural change is the change in these products." (Italics mine.)⁴ As this statement illustrates, Ogburn tended to emphasize the concrete by focusing on inanimate objects as causal agents in social change. Ogburn concluded that so-called "psychological" traits were actually either biologically inherited, and hence relatively constant, or else were culturally induced, in which case their appearance must be traced back to cultural change.⁵

Ogburn stressed that culture has developed independently of biological evolution during the past 25,000 years or so, a period during which mankind's "original nature" had held fairly constant. To illustrate this point, he noted that skulls from the ancient pyramids, when compared with those of modern Egyptians, indicate that certain biological types have persisted in spite of great cultural shifts.⁶ Ogburn also observed that culture changes faster than biology is capable of doing: "Japan has made remarkable changes in her culture within a few decades. It would have been impossible for her people to have changed biologically in this time."⁷ We should note that Ogburn
made these comments in light of the nature-nurture debate which was raging in the early 1920's. Due to the threat from biological determinism, Ogburn responded with -- what was clearly an overcompensation -- a thoroughgoing cultural determinism. And yet, this determinism always had the effect of buttressing Ogburn's progressive view of history.

The most vivid statement of Ogburn's cultural determinism appeared in "Are Inventions Inevitable? A Note on Social Evolution" (1922). In an appendix to this article, Ogburn and research assistant Dorothy Thomas listed 148 cases of simultaneous independent invention or discovery in technology and science. Examples included the telephone, invented by Bell and Gray, both in 1876, and Mendel's laws of heredity, which were rediscovered by both De Vries and Tschermarck in 1900. With this list of inventions as evidence, Ogburn argued that culture has the ability to determine its own growth -- regardless of the mental endowment of individual inventors. As Ogburn noted, mental ability manifests the same distribution within society in each generation. He thus concluded that "mental ability is a factor, since no inventions could be made without it. And the mental ability of inventors is above the average." Mental ability was not the deciding factor, however, since, as Ogburn argued, "a specific invention depends upon a certain cultural preparation. . . ." Ogburn also argued that, even if the various inventors had died in infancy, the same inventions would have appeared, and, moreover, that "cultural progress would have gone on without much delay."
Ogburn therefore concluded that "the processes of cultural evolution [i.e., not mere invention alone] are to be explained in cultural and social terms, that is, in terms of sociology and not terms of biology and psychology." (Italics mine.)

This brings us to the second fundamental dichotomy in Ogburn's thought: the split of "culture" or the "social heritage" into material and non-material culture. Ogburn stressed that material culture "accumulates" over time, as when the use of stone for making tools was supplemented (but not replaced) by bone, followed by copper, bronze, and iron. The superior utility of each of these materials caused them to be retained as part of the cultural heritage, which was thus enlarged. Although he acknowledged that a degree of replacement occurs, as when the manufacture of iron makes stone-chipping obsolete, Ogburn nevertheless argued that "additions have exceeded the discards," so that "the stream of material culture grows bigger" with the passage of time. Ogburn also argued that the addition of elements to material culture causes an increased rate of material innovation. He supported this claim by noting the increasing frequency of occurrence of his 148 inventions and discoveries during the past several centuries. An exponential increase in inventions was suggested also by the number of patents issued in the U.S. between 1840 and 1920. This explosive growth of "material culture" illustrated what Ogburn called the "law of compound interest." in which the principal grows, producing ever-greater interest, even though the rate of interest (which Ogburn likened to mental ability)
remains constant. Ogburn stressed that the present growth of invention increases the probability of rapid social changes in the future.

Ogburn found that non-material culture, which includes "religion, science, art, law and custom" is not as accumulative as is material culture. (It is important to note that, in 1922, Ogburn included science as part of "non-material culture" -- a theme to which we will return presently.) We now turn to the implications of Ogburn's two fundamental distinctions for his two theories of cultural or social "maladjustment."

**Ogburn's Theories of Maladjustment**

Ogburn's more important theory of maladjustment was his hypothesis of cultural lag:

The thesis is that the various parts of modern culture are not changing at the same rate, some parts are changing much more rapidly than others; and that since there is a correlation and interdependence of parts, a rapid change in one part of our culture requires readjustments through other changes in the various correlated parts of culture. . . . Where one part of culture changes first, through some discovery or invention, and occasions changes in some part of culture dependent upon it, there frequently is a delay in the changes occasioned in the dependent part of culture. 16

In describing the cultural lag hypothesis, Ogburn modified the usual material/non-material dichotomy to produce a three-part analysis of culture:

A large part of our environment consists of the material conditions of life and a large part of our social heritage is our material culture. These material things consist of houses, factories, machines, raw materials . . . and other material objects.
In using these material things we employ certain methods . . . [ranging from handling tools to] customs, beliefs, philosophies, laws, [and] governments. 17

Thus far we have noted material culture, plus the "methods" which comprise what Ogburn called the "adaptive culture," that part of non-material culture which is especially susceptible to influence from changes in material culture. The third part of Ogburn's schema is the remainder of non-material culture, which is relatively remote from material culture and is thus "non-adaptive" in character. 18 Ogburn considered religion, for example, as non-adaptive, whereas he saw the family as playing an intermediate, "partly-adaptive" role. 19

Ogburn hastened to affirm that changes in adaptive culture can sometimes cause changes in material culture. He strongly implied, however, that material culture is the determining factor in the modern world. According to Ogburn, material inventions such as the use of steam, electricity, or gasoline, appear independently, "with the idea of satisfying individual wants, because they bring comfort, rest, speed, or wealth." 20 These material innovations, moreover, cause "social changes" as in the size of cities, the position of women, the birth rate, and the nature of education -- i.e., changes throughout non-material culture. Significantly, Ogburn claimed that non-material culture sometimes actually takes the lead in the field of science:
"There may be progress in science, to be followed by changes in material culture, which may be thought of as adaptations of material culture to science." 21 Even though science was not part of "material culture" in the original, 1922 version of the lag hypothesis (a position
which Ogburn would abandon during the 1930's), Ogburn nevertheless noted that "science seems to be rather highly accumulative." 22 As we will see in a later chapter, Ogburn eventually solved this contradiction by assigning science to the realm of "technology" -- a category which more or less replaced his concept of "material culture."

Ogburn presented a rather eclectic list of social, political, and even psychological factors, as causes for cultural lag. These causes included a scarcity of invention in adaptive culture (such as the lack of intelligent innovation in forms of city government), structural obstacles which prevent the diffusion of social inventions (such as state legislatures meeting only every other year), the heterogeneity of society (e.g., workingman's compensation laws were slow in coming because they did not affect the interests of all social classes), a lack of close contact between adaptive and material culture (as in government agencies which are less oriented toward industrial conditions than are organizations of labor and capital), and opposition to changes in non-material culture from group values, especially in the cases of morals, mores, and customs. These reasons for lag are supplemented by Ogburn's separate discussion of "cultural inertia and conservatism" which includes the concepts of "survivals," vested interests, the power of tradition, habit, and the desire to conform. 23

A highly significant theme which runs throughout Ogburn's discussion of the lag hypothesis is the implicit link between social "adjustment" and social science. It is clear that Ogburn's interest in lag was not merely "academic," but was an effort to bring about better
social adjustment through specific reforms. Indeed, Ogburn’s most detailed example of cultural lag was that of worker's compensation laws -- a key item on the Progressive-era reform agenda. The increased number of industrial accidents which accompanied the advent of factory work conditions revealed a lack of social adjustment. Safety regulations and compensation laws brought about a relative degree of adjustment, but the lag-time before these laws appeared was a period of social stress. Another source of lag was the wasteful use of forests before the establishment of conservation laws. Other examples included maladjustments in taxation, family life, trade unions, representative government, and international relations. Whenever a lag occurs, Ogburn argued, "it is desirable to reduce the period of maladjustment, to make the cultural adjustments as quickly as possible." 24 In cases where lags are deemed socially significant, he advised, "the extent of the lag and the severity of the maladjustment should be measured in each instance" -- presumably by social scientists who possess skills in quantitative social research. 25 Ogburn’s lag hypothesis was thus a justification for increased involvement in issues which had been typical of liberal reform before the First World War, but seemed to demand a more scientific, rational approach in the New Era. In short, it was an idea which served social science as well as social progress.

In addition to the cultural lag hypothesis, there is a second kind of "maladjustment" in Ogburn’s writings. While "cultural lag" rests on the material/non-material dichotomy, the so-called "biological
lag" theory is based on the distinction between culture and original nature. Ogburn detected a constant tension between man's essentially primitive nature and the artificial character of civilization, and so stressed the need for "adjustment between human nature and culture." Ogburn called his second, lesser-known concept of maladjustment "the theory of the cave man in the modern city" -- based on his observation that man's cultural development since the last ice age has not been matched by comparable biological evolution. This disparity between human nature and civilization, Ogburn argued, was responsible for a host of modern problems such as nervousness and insanity, mental illness, crime, "sex problems," and selfishness.

The effect of the biological lag theory was to cast doubts on the benefits of modern "machine civilization" -- the very opposite of Ogburn's usual sanguine appraisal of cultural growth:

Can we, being biologically the same as Cro-Magnon men, adjust ourselves to the sedentary life demanded of office workers? If we suffer from indigestion, can it be due to the fact that we do not eat the food that the cave men ate; or that we do not take the muscular exercise which the life of the primitive hunter demanded? Do we have difficulties in adjusting ourselves to our institution of marriage and a rigid sex code? May not these difficulties be due to our primitive nature which may have been adjusted in the age of the cave dwellers and anthropoids to a more promiscuous expression?

This vivid passage (written, incidentally, a number of years before Freud's Civilization and its Discontents was first published) suggests that biological lag, as opposed to the cultural lag theory, was actually non-progressivist in outlook. This was a glaring inconsistency
on Ogburn's part, since he usually implied that cultural evolution equals "progress" and is ultimately beneficial. The biological lag theory, however, viewed the development of civilization as a source of maladjustment.

In considering ways to lessen the problem of "biological lag," Ogburn weighed two possible approaches: "changing human nature versus controlling social evolution." He argued that, while bending human nature to the demands of culture is the more traditional method of adjustment, the attendant repression often produces harmful neuroses. Ogburn thus favored the second option: to adjust culture to human nature. He warned, however, that, in spite of the relatively greater flexibility of culture,

it does not follow that these cultural changes are controlled and purposively directed by man. Despite the fact that man appears as an active agent in these changes, cultural factors such as social forces and economic processes play quite a determining part in these changes. It is not true that man creates culture freely as he wills. . . . Culture grows because of purely cultural factors, despite the fact that this growth occurs through the medium of human beings.

Ogburn therefore recommended, not the overhaul of culture as a whole, but specific, minor behavioral adjustments, including recreation, sex education, shorter work hours, "modification of social codes," and "recognition of boundaries of selfishness." He concluded that

it appears as a grandiose dream to think of controlling according to the will of man the course of social evolution. Our conclusions indicate indeed that to change man to fit culture or to change culture to fit man is each so difficult a task as to be almost impossible. (Italics mine.)
In the case of "biological lag," we see Ogburn's cultural determinism producing a pessimistic -- rather than a progressive -- view of culture. Ogburn admitted that man is not "in the supreme role of planning, controlling and directing" social change. The main hope for adjustment therefore lay within culture, through the better adjustment of one part to another, as the cultural lag hypothesis suggested. "Cultural lag" generally avoided the sobering themes implicit in "biological lag," because it suggested that non-material culture is susceptible to scientific social control. In this sense, "cultural lag" was by far the more optimistic -- as well as practicable -- of the two theories. These were important reasons for the emphasis on cultural lag, and near absence of "the theory of the cave man in the modern city," in Ogburn's post-1922 writings.

In Part I of this essay, we will see that Ogburn's definitions of cultural progress and maladjustment were by no means original. But we will also see how they conveyed a bold simplicity and a rhetorical appeal beyond that of the many similar theories which preceded them.
CHAPTER 2
THE TECHNOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

Many sociologists have attributed Ogburn's social change and cultural lag theories to inspiration from Marxian theory. For example, in discussing various theories of social evolution, John L. Gillan links together "Marx and other economic determinists, Ogburn, Dorothy S. Thomas, Hexter, and Mitchell with their emphasis upon the technological factor. . . ." 1 Alvin Boskoff notes a "long tradition of 'lag theories,' such as those of Marx, Vierkandt, Ogburn, Alfred Weber, Odum, Giddings, and Chapin. 2 David Riesman, moreover, has pointed out Ogburn's connection with both Marx and Thorstein Veblen. All three of these theorists, Riesman argues, emphasized the "effort of the rest of the culture to catch up with the machine-made industrial revolution. . . ." 3 Some confusion over the issue of Ogburn's roots appears in the writings of Arthur K. Davis, who, at one point, declared that "Veblen is doubtless the main source of the cultural lag concept which has been so prominent in American social thought during the last generation. . . ." 4 And yet, Davis had earlier claimed, with a good deal more accuracy, that "Veblen did not originate the . . . cultural lag approach; the idea is central in Marx and in the emphasis on 'survival' evident in the Darwinian and other evolutionary trends in social science." 5 As we will see here and in succeeding chapters, Davis' second statement, with its emphasis on nineteenth-century sources, suggests the best approach to understanding Ogburn's thought.
To begin with, however, we should ask what Ogburn himself said about the origin of his ideas. Specifically, what was the relationship between his lag hypothesis and Marxian thought? In "Cultural Lag as Theory" (1957), written just two years before his death, Ogburn offered his own account of how he formulated the lag concept:

There is some interest always in the origin of an invention and how ideas develop. It therefore seems appropriate that I discuss briefly how this theory of 'the cultural lag' was developed. I am happy to discuss its origin, since I have been accused by some of taking the theory from Thorstein Veblen and by others from Karl Marx. I am quite sure that there was no direct taking over of the idea from Veblen because I had never read him on this point. I had read Marx, and his materialistic interpretation of history was well known to social scientists and historians in general. This idea was a base, however, from which the theory of cultural lag was developed, but certainly neither the materialistic interpretation of history nor economic determinism is the same as cultural lag. 6

This account reveals Ogburn's penchant for hairsplitting with regard to the distinction between his lag hypothesis and his theory of social change. Such distinctions are misleading, since Ogburn's applications of the lag concept to specific situations show that it was firmly embedded in a "technological interpretation of history." Most important, the embeddedness of "lag" in this theory of history, as we will see, helped give the lag hypothesis its optimistic, progressivist character.

In spite of the disclaimer quoted above, Ogburn admitted the essentially Marxian inspiration for "cultural lag:"

I first used the term in 1914, when I was a professor of economics and sociology at Reed College. I had for a long time been impressed with the economic interpretation of history,
though as a user of partial correlation techniques I was appreciative of its limitations. 7

Ogburn illustrated the economic interpretation of history with the idea that the religious ideology of the Medieval Crusades justified the quest to seek trade routes to Asia. The notion that such economic motives are often "obscured or disguised" led Ogburn to attempt a synthesis of Marx and Freud: 8 "This word, 'disguised,' was widely current in the early part of the twentieth century because of the influence of Freud, all of whose writings I had read at the time." 9 Ogburn stressed that "rationalization" was by far the most prevalent device for disguising men's selfish economic motivations. 10

This psychoanalytic theme, however, played only a short-term role in Ogburn's writings. By the early 1920's, Ogburn had shifted away from his partially-Freudian emphasis, and had embraced a simplified form of Marxism:

As I thought more about it, the disguise factor in social causation seemed less important than the time factor. I noticed this time factor in unequal rates of change, particularly in the course I was giving on the family. I remarked that many changes were taking place in the family and that most of them seemed to be due to the *economic factor*, which removed production activities . . . from the household and put them in factories, thus taking away many household duties of the wife. Yet the ideology of the position of the housewife persisted. It was said that woman's place was in the home. Also at the beginning of the twentieth century there was serious discussion as to whether women should go to college or not, because their place was in the home. I was impressed with the fact that the transfer of production from the home to the factory was precipitating a new locale for women outside the home. But there was a great time interval; that is to say, there was a lag in changing the position of women; so I came to see great importance in this lag, and, being active at that time in various reform movements, I was disturbed about the maladjustment in the position of women who were kept at home. I was an ardent feminist. So both lag and maladjustment impressed me. (Italics mine.) 11
Ogburn's high estimation of "the economic factor" -- the factor seen in the transfer of production from the family to the factory -- shows that the lag idea was indeed implicit in his reading of the economic interpretation of history.

Yet, as Ogburn's writings clearly reveal, the "economic factor" was not the independent variable on which he really focused. Although he sometimes mentioned the "economic factor," Ogburn actually concentrated on technology as the prime mover in social change:

This [cultural lag] theory I had fully developed by 1915, but I hesitated to publish it, because I thought that theories should have some proof before publication. But the war came along, and it was only after the war that I took up the verification of this hypothesis by considering the adjustment of law to industrial accidents, which were increasing because of the introduction of whirling machinery with rapidly moving wheels. In this case, the independent variable was technology; the machinery of which, before the factory system, had been simple tools. . . . (Italics mine.) 12

In this passage, Ogburn puts the emphasis on technological implements rather than "economic factors" generally. This primary role for technology applied not only to the factory illustration of cultural lag. In his 1936 article, "Technology and Governmental Change," Ogburn gave specific examples of the social effects of technological inventions throughout history:

Steam and steel were major forces in developing our extensive urban life. Gunpowder influenced the decline of feudalism. The discovery of seed-planting destroyed the hunting cultures and brought a radically new form of social life. The automobile is helping to create the metropolitan community. 13

Throughout his career, Ogburn continually pointed out how
technological innovation has led to institutional change. He stated this theme succinctly when he declared that "an invention is a change itself, but it [also] has social effects and creates social changes." 14

Ogburn often acknowledged that there are also "social inventions," and that in some cases these cause changes in the material or technological realm. Examples of social inventions include "proportional representation, social insurance, the holding company, and the League of Nations." 15 Social invention shapes mechanical invention in such instances as when "a zoning law, as in New York, may force architectural devices to be used to modify the skyline, or an antinoise campaign may cause the invention of a rubber horseshoe used in connection with milk wagons on early-morning deliveries." 16

Such examples were part of Ogburn's efforts to keep his lag thesis from being branded as a version of technological determinism. In his account of the idea's origin, Ogburn conceded that in many of his examples of lag, maladjustment was initiated by technological changes and scientific discoveries, and the lagging adaptive culture was generally some social organization or ideology. These illustrations led to the characterization, by some, of the theory of cultural lag as a technological interpretation of history. I stated, however, at the time the hypothesis of cultural lag was published that the independent variable could very well be an ideology or a non-technological variable. 17

This statement obscures the fact that, in Ogburn's actual descriptions of long-range historical change, the impetus nearly always came from technology. As he observed in the next paragraph, "in our times in the Western world, technology and science are the great prime movers of social change." 18
Ogburn provided a sweeping application of his "technological interpretation of history" -- and gave examples of cultural lag -- in his explanation of the shift in institutional power which has accompanied modernization. The family, church, and village were at one time the leading institutions, containing within themselves many of the functions of present-day industry and government. With the growth of industry and government, however, production passed from the family to an outside industry. . . . Education left the family and the church for the state. Protection against sickness, of old age, and even over children, went partly away from the family to the state. Recreation ceased being centered in the family. The church separated from the state. . . . The vast changes that took place had their impetus in the technological development of the material culture, particularly in power from coal and tools from iron. 19

Thus, the advent of technological growth caused leading institutions to decline in influence while industry and government, "after an interval" (i.e., a period of lag) began to grow. 20

Ogburn codified this technological emphasis with his "four-chain sequence" theory of social change. He observed that the influence of technology on institutions and ideas is not direct, but takes place through a chain of "intermediaries." 21 "A very common pattern" declared Ogburn, "is for the technological change to affect, first, an economic organization which, second, causes a change in some social institution, such as the family or government, and which finally causes a change in the social philosophy of a people." (Italics mine.) 22 (It should be noted that "economic" factors are secondary to "technology" here.) In this four-chain sequence of social causation,
a change in one link (e.g., technology) will normally be followed by a change in the succeeding link (industry) -- yet the entire sequence entails delays. The obvious implication is that there are several opportunities for cultural lag; changes in technology soon affect industry ("economic organization"), but take longer to affect social institutions such as government. Lags, in other words, are a by-product of technological progress.

As he described the "four-chain sequence" of social change, Ogburn sought to clarify the relationship between his theory and Marxian thought:

The statement of sequence is an elaboration of the theory of the economic interpretation of history, made by placing a technological factor before the economic factor. *The economic interpretation of history really is a technological interpretation of history.* (Italics mine.)

In a later statement, Ogburn actually distanced himself from an "economic" interpretation. He observed that social forces are usually seen as economic, and there is a great body of literature concerned with the economic interpretation of history. . . . But back of economic forces are invention changes, as Karl Marx rightly emphasized. The invention interpretation of history is, indeed, like the economic interpretation of history, only one step removed. (Italics mine.)

Ogburn again stressed the penetrating character of his "technological interpretation" when he argued that if this [economic] analysis were carried one step further, back of the economic organizations, there would come a technological interpretation of history. The argument here presented is that the explanation of history would be somewhat better achieved if there were added a further explanation of the invention influence back of the rise and variations of economic forces.

As an example of good "invention" interpretation, Ogburn
cited Walter Prescott Webb's *The Great Plains* (1931), which demonstrated that the American plains were conquered by means of three inventions: the six-shooter pistol, barbed wire, and the windmill. 26

As the passages quoted above suggest, Ogburn argued for an extremely simplified version of historical materialism, specifically regarding the causitive factors within what Marx called the "material base." One Marxian scholar points out that "the language Marx uses in setting out the materialist conception of history . . . is not precise and his work contains many concessions and admissions of countervailing influences. . . ." 27 This equivocal aspect of Marx has led many of his followers to posit a two-way or dialectical influence between material and social factors. Ogburn's "four-chain sequence," by contrast, contained a one-way determinism, beginning with technological forces of production, moving to economic relations and institutions, and ending with the superstructure of social institutions and social philosophy. Therefore, in his effort to push the source of change back "one step further," and thus to outdo Marx in depth of analysis, Ogburn actually became comparatively superficial -- and stumbled into an extreme technological determinism.

It was, nevertheless, a determinism with a distinctly progressivist cast. By concentrating on the tangible implements of technology, Ogburn downplayed any dialectical patterns of causation between these purely "inventional" forces and the "social relations of production." Ogburn's streamlined vision of history screened out
human personality and contingency, thus leaving few impediments in the path of technological progress. The implication of this simplistic social theory, as with Ogburn's list of 148 independent inventions and discoveries, was that technological and scientific advance is automatic and indeed "inevitable."

Paradoxically, the very crudity of Ogburn's technological determinism served to recommend his lag hypothesis to thinkers who welcomed a liberal, progressivist approach to social critique. The "technological interpretation of history" tied the lag hypothesis to an optimistic liberalism which accepted the industrial status quo (narrowly defined as inventions) as given, not as a candidate for criticism. "Adjustment," for Ogburn, did not include the epoch-making revolutions and class antagonisms characteristic of the Marxian view. The result was a domesticated version of the Marxian theory of history. The middle-of-the-road character of the cultural lag thesis was made manifest especially in Ogburn's examples of the lag phenomena; they always suggested institutional reform within the basic framework of industrial capitalism. As a result, Ogburn offered social scientists a tool with which they could claim influence -- without unduly jeopardizing their aspirations to the role of expert social authorities deferred to by a confident public.

The abstract, reified -- and progressive -- character of this "technological interpretation of history" was reinforced by a "superorganic" culture concept which Ogburn borrowed from his anthropologist colleagues. The next chapter will explore the
implications of this distinctive view of culture.
CHAPTER 3
THE SUPERORGANIC

What was probably the first review of William Ogburn's *Social Change* appeared, not in a sociological journal, but in the *American Anthropologist*. Alfred Kroeber remarked that reading Ogburn's book was "to the anthropologist like meeting a fellow countryman in a strange land."¹ The strange land, of course, was sociology, which Kroeber reported to be heavily populated by social psychologists. Kroeber also observed that, in contrast to Ogburn, most sociologists were not

students of social products or the causes of these products. They have investigated societies, not the social heritages whose existence they recognized and then felt little further interest in. Ogburn is interested in heritages or civilizational aspects and attempts to penetrate to their causality.²

The implication was that Ogburn focused on the tangible, enduring "products" of civilization -- rather than the interaction of individuals emphasized by the more psychologically-oriented sociologists. In another early review, anthropologist Robert Lowie said of Ogburn's book that "there is probably no clearer elementary exposition of the contrast between social and biological heritage; in other words, of that anthropological concept of culture. . . ."³

These reviews suggest that Ogburn played a special role in introducing a concept of "social heritage" or "culture" into the discipline of sociology. As Alfred Kroeber correctly pointed out, Ogburn emphasized the cultural factor in a way which made him unique among American sociologists. Robert Lowie, in turn, equated
Ogburn's "social heritage" with the "anthropological concept of culture." Lowie's interpretation on this point, however, is somewhat misleading. Actually, Ogburn's view of culture was subtly different from that held by most "cultural" anthropologists -- other than Kroeber and Lowie. Ogburn and his two anthropological admirers (although Kroeber especially) held a "superorganic" view of culture, which excluded psychological factors from having any influence on social change. While Ogburn's treatment of the culture concept is of interest in itself, we will see that its ultimate effect was to strengthen the progressivism of his social theory.

Ogburn and the Anthropological Culture Concept

It is clear from his writings that Ogburn drew a great deal of inspiration from the new "cultural" anthropology led by Franz Boas. Boas' students Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Clark Wissler, and Alexander Goldenweiser, among others, were also prominent leaders of this new approach. These anthropologists (especially Lowie and Goldenweiser) often commended the new culture concept in articles they wrote for sociological journals. Ogburn, however, deserves to be remembered as a pioneer applicant of this view within sociology. Melville Herskovitts and Malcolm Willey said as much when they reported in 1923 that "Ogburn, in Social Change, has blazed the way for sociologists in the application of the newer method." 4 We have already seen Lowie's equation of Ogburn's cultural view with the "anthropological concept of culture." Similarly, historian Harry Elmer
Barnes claimed that Ogburn had produced "the first thoroughgoing development of the cultural point of view by a sociologist." Probably the most authoritative source of this view of Ogburn was Kroeber and Kluckhohn's monumental *Culture: a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (1952), which identified Ogburn's *Social Change* as "the first major work by an American sociologist in which the anthropological concept of culture was prominently employed." 

We still must ask, however, whether this interpretation of Ogburn's historic role might, in reality, obscure some distinctive tendencies of his social change theory. Herskovitts and Willey qualified their assessment of Ogburn by noting that both Ogburn and Kroeber held to an extreme doctrine of cultural determinism [which] must not be confused with [the views of] such scholars as Boas, Goldenweiser, Wissler, and Lowie, who utilize the historical and psychological inter-relations . . . instead of placing emphasis solely on the impersonal cultural factor.

Ogburn, then, drew from the Boasians unequally, and focused primarily on Kroeber -- especially Kroeber's "superorganic" (i.e., non-psychological) view of culture. Thus, in spite of all that he gained from the new anthropology, Ogburn did not adhere to the mainstream of Boasian culture theory. This difference between Ogburn and the anthropologists was due to the different set of concerns which motivated each.

In their efforts to define "culture," and to establish anthropology as an independent discipline, the Boasians distanced themselves from a variety of "naturalistic" social theories, chief of
which was social evolutionism. Although it is common to attribute the
evolutionist view of social development to the strong "biological"
influence on social theory during the nineteenth century, we should
note that social evolutionism was for the most part based on an analogy
with biological growth. It is true that an element of biological or
racial determinism, which taught that each society or culture had
progressed concomitant with that group's mental development, was
implicit in social evolutionism. This biologicist theme, however, was
usually submerged among a wider set of assumptions about the
stage-like history of social development. Social evolutionism itself,
moreover, declined in the early twentieth century. As Alexander
Goldenweiser wrote in 1925,

all modern ethnology, with disappearancely few exceptions, builds
upon the ruins of the classical evolutionary doctrine. Its tenets
have been shattered to splinters. No anthropologist today believes
in an orderly and fixed procession of cultural development.

Although Ogburn joined the Boasians in criticizing all forms of
"naturalistic" social thought, he was really most concerned with actual
biological determinism. Thus, while anthropologists Goldenweiser
and Wissler launched elaborate attacks against geographic
determinism, Ogburn dismissed this viewpoint rather easily. And
while Lowie vigorously refuted arch-evolutionist Lewis Henry Morgan's
*Ancient Society* (1877), Ogburn spent but little time criticizing the
evolutionary outlook of Morgan's work. By the time Ogburn wrote,
social evolutionism (in its surface characteristics if not its deeper
presuppositions) had been rejected by the younger anthropologists
and sociologists. As Ogburn noted, "the inevitable series of stages in
the development of social institutions... has [already] been
disproven." 10 Likewise, the organic analogy was not of primary
concern to Ogburn: "The attempts to find laws of heredity, variation
and selection in the evolution of social institutions have produced few
results... These results are in the main only analogous and
illustrative." 11

What did raise Ogburn's hackles was the resurgence of racist-thinking which came with the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics
around the turn of the century. This trend toward new racist theorems of cultural variation and social change reached a climax with
the launching of the Galton Society in New York in 1918. Society
members advocated a program of eugenics or racial improvement
through selective breeding -- and, by implication, strongly sided with
"nature" in the nature-nurture controversy. Therefore, even after the
decline of social evolutionism, Ogburn could still complain that "it is
quite generally assumed that the status of the culture of any people is
an index of the stage of their inherent mental development as a
race." 12 Ogburn was obviously chagrinned by the continued
"overemphasis" on biological ideas in social thought. He noted that,
originally, the impact of Darwinism

was so overshadowing that it seemed to cast something like a
hypnotic spell on others doing research... [It became almost a
fad to refer to biological causes and to make biological
interpretations for many social phenomena. Of recent years the
tendency to get away from the spell is noticeable, but the rise of
the eugenists has given added emphasis to the importance of
biology for sociology. 13
Ogburn clearly regarded the renewed interest in biological determinism as a threat to sociological interpretation.

Due to this extreme threat from the eugenics movement, Ogburn sought extreme theoretical measures by which to promote the independence of sociology from non-sociological influences. In his early writings, Ogburn cited a number of articles and books by cultural anthropologists, always including works by Alfred Kroeber, which spurred him to thoroughly separate "culture" from "original nature."

Ogburn later testified to the primacy of Kroeber's influence on his thinking:

That part of society that has evolved is some other element than the biological. To the anthropologists, particularly to Robert Lowie and to Alfred Kroeber, in 1917, we are indebted for the clearest conception of what that other element is. It is culture. 14

The date 1917 indicates Kroeber's landmark article "The Superorganic," and Lowie's Culture and Ethnology, as the especially "clear" expositions of the culture concept. Of the two works, Kroeber's influenced Ogburn most overtly. Kroeber was the first to emphasize the examples of simultaneous independent inventions which Ogburn later employed.

In his article, Kroeber posited three discrete levels of phenomena: inorganic, organic, and superorganic, and insisted that scientific explanations apply only to the lower two levels. The superorganic, however, was the special province of social or cultural inquiry. Kroeber used instances of dual inventions to demonstrate that cultural growth is determined by forces wholly within the
superorganic or cultural level -- apart from the mental (i.e., psychological) endowment of outstanding individuals. Once the growth of culture has prepared the way for a discovery, it is likely that more than one mentally-acute person will find it. Thus, it was "inconceivable" to Kroeber that the independent discoveries made, for example, by Darwin and Wallace, "should have been an affair of pure chance." Kroeber argued, moreover, that Darwin probably would not have been a "great man" if he had lived fifty years earlier or later than he did. By the same token, Kroeber suggested that natural selection would have been formulated even if had Darwin never lived.

Ogburn borrowed Kroeber's superorganic argument, yet especially emphasized the dynamic character of culture; he pointed out that organic factors hold fairly constant while culture is variable. As Ogburn put it, "in the analysis of cause of any phenomenon, it is the factors that are variable that are said to be causes." He noted, for example, that "it may be that there has been change in... [man's response to] consciousness of kind, but the question is whether such change has been in the cultural nature of kind or in the inherited psychological nature of consciousness." Ogburn clearly wanted to show that socio-cultural changes derive from cultural influence. Once culture is made the sole variable in social change, the purely cultural explanation of the appearance of a custom or trait could be pushed to its limits. According to historian George Stocking, in his analysis of Kroeber's superorganic concept, the social scientist could use this "pushing" strategy "to show that many phenomena which had been
thought to be biological were in fact culturally determined." 19

Kroeber's and Ogburn's use of a pushing strategy, a reaction to
biological determinism, led to the opposite extreme of a full-fledged
cultural determinism. 20 As several of Kroeber's colleagues pointed
out, the superorganic theory tended to reify "culture" and ignore the
causal potency of the individual. 21 And, as we have seen, Herskovits
and Willey said the same of Ogburn, that the view of culture found in
Social Change led to an "extreme doctrine of cultural
determinism. . . ." 22

The Emergence of a "Culture Concept" in Sociology

We now return to the question of Ogburn's role in introducing
the "culture concept" to sociology. While, in one sense, we may
accurately label Ogburn as a pioneer of cultural sociology, it is
important to also note that other sociologists had been developing a
"cultural" approach since the early years of the century -- a trend
which clearly predated Ogburn's writings. How, then, did Ogburn's
"superorganic" concept compare with the cultural emphasis already
begun by other sociologists?

From the 1890's until around the First World War, which were
Ogburn's formative years (he received his PhD in 1912), American
sociology was undergoing a crucial reorientation. Late-nineteenth and
early-twentieth-century sociology was heavily dependent on ideas from
biology and psychology. "Psychology" here requires clarification, since
it was a subtle combination of biology and psychology which held sway
in early sociological theory. During the nineteenth century, psychology was conceived as a partially-hereditarian matter, as in William James' instinct psychology. This older theory, which combined psychological and biological influences, was based on the Lamarckian principle of inheritance of acquired (i.e., experientially-derived) traits. In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, American sociology was gradually moving away from this psycho-biological orientation, and toward viewing the psyche as a social or cultural creation (i.e., social psychology). What is especially interesting is that the new social view of mental life roughly paralleled the Boasian effort to distinguish "culture" from mental and racial determinants of group behavior. As George Stocking observes, the teachings of the new social psychology "were in important respects similar to the culture concept which was emerging simultaneously in anthropology." 23 And yet, while the sociologists (especially William Graham Sumner and W. I. Thomas, in writings during the 1900's decade) borrowed much of their evidence from ethnological works, the theoretical generalizations at which they arrived were to a large extent an "independent invention" -- independent, that is, of Boasian influence.

This convergence of anthropology and sociology on a non-biological "culture concept" was an uneven development, since many sociologists, up until the early 1910's, held that social interaction was a product of mental evolution. Thus, sociology retained a biological foundation for cultural theory. 24 By the 1920's,
however, anthropology and sociology were more directly sharing their concepts, and indeed William Ogburn was an important bridge in this regard. Also, by that decade, social scientists generally sought an even more radical distinction between "culture" and biological heredity. But this does not mean that sociology had embraced Ogburn's "superorganic" view of culture. Rather, the "culture concept" among most sociologists involved a mixture of the concrete and cumulative "social heredity" (a la Ogburn) and, more centrally, an interactive social psychology.

This subtle mixture of the mental-interaction viewpoint and the concept of "social heritage" is well represented by Charles Horton Cooley's influential Social Organization (1909):

> By the aid of this structure [i.e., communication], the individual is a member not only of a family, a class and a state, but of a larger whole reaching back to prehistoric men whose thought has gone to build it up. 25

On one hand, Cooley stressed the historical "build up," the idea of progressive cultural accumulation as seen in Ogburn's theory. On the other hand, he argued that individuals participate in the social heritage only by means of communication. This psychological approach to the social heritage was emphasized also by sociologist Charles A. Ellwood. According to Ellwood,

> the vehicle of culture is the system of intercommunication, especially spoken and written language. Culture, in other words, upon analysis consists of ideas, of mental patterns, which are passed along from individual to individual, and which collectively form the tradition and custom of the group. 26

A wider survey of sociological writings reveals that this
mental-interactionist approach to culture and social heredity was quite popular by the 1920's. This trend suggests that Ogburn's "superorganic" view was an extreme position in American sociology. Indeed, as Alfred Kroeber implied in his review of Social Change, Ogburn was like a stranger in his own country, since he did not share the social psychology orientation held by his colleagues.

As we saw in Chapter One, Ogburn himself made plain his rejection of the dominant sociological approach to "culture" when he criticized the views of his teacher, Franklin H. Giddings. Giddings held that "consciousness of kind" among biologically similar individuals breeds like-mindedness and cooperation. This tendency toward group cohesiveness was further intensified through continued intercommunication. But Ogburn argued that Giddings' excellently laid psychological foundations of sociology do not alone explain a [i.e., any] particular type of social heritage. It is quite necessary to consider the historical process entirely apart from the psychological nature of collective behavior. 27

Because (according to Ogburn) psychology was grounded in mental capacities which have not evolved in many centuries, Gidding's "psychological foundations" could not explain social change. Thus, while most sociologists regarded the new social psychology as a distinctly anti-biological movement, Ogburn obviously thought that they were not carrying their efforts far enough, and that their version of the culture concept was not sufficiently divorced from biology.

In spite of what we have seen so far, there was an important point of agreement between Ogburn and his fellow sociologists
concerning cultural determinism. Many sociologists realized that inventions were, at least to a limited extent, dependent on cultural preparation rather than individual genius. W. I. Thomas, for example, affirmed in 1909 that

the level of culture of the group limits the power of the mind to meet a crisis and readjust. . . . The individual mind cannot rise much above the group-mind. . . . On this account it is just to attribute important movements and inventions to individuals only in a qualified sense. The extraordinary individual works on the material and psychic fund already present, and if the situation is not ripe neither is he ripe. From this standpoint we can understand why it is almost never possible to attribute any great modern invention to any single person. When the state of science and social need reach a certain point a number of persons are likely to solve the same problem. 28

Thomas obviously had in mind the phenomenon of multiple independent inventions, even before Kroeber or Ogburn wrote on that subject. Thomas, however, also pointed to psychological mechanisms which shape the diversity and temporal changes which societies manifest. Other sociologists at this time were discovering how "culture" or group life shapes individual thought and behavior -- yet none of them emphasized this with the thoroughgoing cultural determinism that Ogburn did. 29

The Progressivism of the Superorganic

Our discussion of Ogburn's use of the superorganic concept helps in assessing Ogburn's role in the history of cultural theory. Equally important, it sheds light on his view of social change as inevitable technological progress. Indeed, in Ogburn's social theory, the concrete manifestation of the superorganic concept is "the
inevitability of inventions." As a purely "superorganic" phenomenon, the growth of inventions has little to do with individuals or with psychological factors such as genius. The broad implication is that the capriciousness of history has little effect on technological development. The superorganic concept thus reinforced Ogburn's "technological interpretation of history" -- the thesis that history is driven by inexorable technological advance. 30

The progressivism of this technology-oriented superorganic view undergirded the plausibility of Ogburn's cultural lag hypothesis. Ogburn founded his lag hypothesis upon the prior, common-sense observation that new inventions have social consequences. That is, technological progress ripples out into society as a whole and affects social institutions -- although with a delayed effect. This delayed effect found expression in Ogburn's notion of unequal rates of change in material and non-material culture. Inventions, Ogburn told his readers, can be expected to proliferate at a steadily increasing rate in the future, with resulting, albeit delayed, social changes. Therefore, if inventions would accumulate inevitably and do so at a faster rate than other parts of culture, was it not obvious that lags would result? The dynamic cultural growth suggested by the superorganic theory contributed to the progressivist ambiance which surrounded "cultural lag" and made Ogburn's famous phrase attractive to many American thinkers. The net result was that, while the "superorganic" version of the culture concept was out of step with dominant sociological theory, the lag hypothesis that it buttressed was well in step with the
scientific and technological progressivism of many social scientists.

In the next three chapters, we will explore the late-nineteenth
and early-twentieth-century evolutionist and historicist views of social
change and "maladjustment." As we will see, this broad intellectual
tradition both inspired Ogburn's "cultural lag" and provided a favorable
climate for its reception.
CHAPTER 4
THE SOCIAL EVOLUTIONIST TRADITION

It was a departure from the norm for a sociologist in the early 1920's to use the term "culture," as Ogburn did in Social Change: With Respect to Culture and Original Nature. In appropriating this anthropological language, Ogburn was clearly aligning himself with the anti-biological views of the Boasians, in an effort to complete the re-orientation of sociological theory along cultural lines. We have already seen, however, that it is subtly misleading to identify Ogburn's thought too closely with Boasian cultural theory or with the emergent "cultural" viewpoint in sociology. It is an even greater misunderstanding to regard Ogburn's thought as part of a clear-cut reaction against nineteenth-century social science -- even though he ostensibly adopted the "new" understanding of culture. As we will see in the present chapter, Ogburn's social thought was deeply embedded in an older evolutionist social theory. 1

Ogburn was clearly interested in the growth of the great tree of civilization, rather than in the features of its separate branches. This fascination with the evolution of civilization (or culture) is evident in Ogburn's comment that "there was a time when culture was very small. Now it is very great and wonderful. We call it civilization. How has civilization grown to be what it is?" 2 Ogburn also noted that, "while the biological evolution of man within the past 25,000 years is problematical and has not been proved, there has certainly been a great development in culture, which in recent years is very
remarkable." 3 These statements (both from his first book) suggest Ogburn's adherence to a unitary concept of culture -- similar to what social evolutionists such as Herbert Spencer and Edward B. Tylor had championed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As late as 1950, Ogburn was still -- indeed more explicitly than in 1922 -- arguing for a unitary culture concept. He described his interest in the overall sweep of social evolution, that is, "the general process whereby modern civilization came to be what it is . . . ," not "the details of why the Mohamedan civilization arose or differed from that of the Hindus." 4

As the above statements indicate, Ogburn's concept of historical change closely resembled the "abstract history" advanced during the Enlightenment and adopted by Auguste Comte. 5 At least two writers have argued that Ogburn carried forward this essentially eighteenth-century view. University of California sociologist Margaret Hodgen, who wrote a treatise on the doctrine of survivals in 1936, declared that Ogburn's social change theory incorporated "every tenet of eighteenth-century developmentalism." 6 Hodgen also affirmed that Ogburn's ideas rest on "the familiar assumption that change in culture, like growth in the organism, is inherent in the nature of things, purposeful and progressive. . . ." 7 More recently, historian Dorothy Ross has described Ogburn as a proponent of progressivist ideology in American social science, and has linked his social change theory to the Enlightenment (specifically French) belief in scientific progress. This linkage is indeed fundamental to locating Ogburn's place in
intellectual history -- although Ross's discussion omits the important intermediate role played by the social evolutionists, in conveying the Enlightenment idea of history to the twentieth century. As historian Maurice Mandelbaum points out, Comte's notion of abstract history "was also adopted by all later social evolutionists, who regarded social forms of organization as different stages in a single pattern of evolutionary development." In a parallel discussion, Robert Nisbet notes that the evolutionist reconstruction of the past was not real history, but rather was a method for studying social development. To the extent, then, that Ogburn focused on the "general process" of social development, he followed in the footsteps of both Comte and the late-Victorian evolutionists.

Ogburn himself provided the best evidence showing the fundamental continuity between his social theory and that of the evolutionist thinkers. In a statement apparently directed against the Boasians, Ogburn expressed dissatisfaction with the new pluralistic view of culture:

> Anthropologists, who have done such excellent work on social evolution, have, I think, not defined the problem properly. In general they have abandoned the explanation of culture for the attempt to explain cultures. (Italics mine.)

Ogburn clearly favored a unitary and progressive, rather than a plural and relativistic, view of culture. For Franz Boas and his students, however, pluralism was at the heart of the culture concept. In their eyes, there were as many "cultures" as there were distinct tribal or ethnic groups. As George Stocking explains, the Boasians
"rejected an evolutionism that submerged the variety of human cultural manifestations in a single evolving human culture. . . ." 13 Boas shunned the preconception that economic factors, for instance, should be universally more important than folklore, kinship, ritual, or linguistics. 14 Ogburn, on the other hand, emphasized "material culture" or "technology" as the prime mover in social change. By focusing on industrial society, and presumably on the diffusion of Western culture throughout the world, Ogburn could indeed propose generalizations about "a single evolving human culture." Thus, in spite of his debt to Boasian culture theory, Ogburn actually founded his concept of social change on evolutionist presuppositions.

We should pause to note that, as some historians have argued, the Boasians themselves often agreed with the evolutionists on fundamental presuppositions about social change (even though the Boasians differed by stressing cultural pluralism). Robert Nisbet notes the "veritable barrage" of attacks, beginning around the turn of the century, which were directed by Boas, Kroeber, and especially Robert Lowie, against Morgan and other evolutionists. 15 But in spite of these attacks, Nisbet argues, the underlying evolutionist philosophy has not "seriously diminished in twentieth century regard. Whatever may have been the waning of interest in the more panoramic aspects of the theory of evolution during the first half of the century -- interest in universal origins and sequences of stages of development for mankind -- there is no evidence that there was much if any waning of interest in the key concepts of evolutionary theory. . . ." 16 Harry Elmer
Barnes, who helped popularize the Boasian view of culture, also called attention to the influence of evolutionism on twentieth-century anthropology. Barnes argued that the dynamic element of Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877) was of permanent value. "This rests upon [Morgan's] . . . contention that culture advances and institutions change as the technological items in man's control over his environment are enlarged and improved," declared Barnes. 17 Even more fundamental was the idea that man's technology and institutions develop in an orderly, sequential process. "This is the vital item," affirmed Barnes, "and critical [i.e., Boasian] anthropology has not overthrown this contention of Morgan and his fellow evolutionists." 18 If such fundamental evolutionist views persisted widely, then they must have helped to provide a favorable intellectual environment for the reception of Ogburn's social theory.

At this point, we may summarize what Ogburn did and did not derive from the Boasians. On one hand, he joined the Boasians in rejecting both the theory of specific evolutionary stages and the comparative method, as well as any implicit racial or mental determinism. 19 On the other hand, Ogburn retained (in one form or another) the unitary view of culture, the theme of progress and growth, the emphasis on tools and technology as the best evidence of social evolution, Lewis Henry Morgan's description of gradual cultural accumulation, and Edward B. Tylor's doctrine of survivals (although, as we shall see, a distinctive variation of this doctrine). These elements of continuity with evolutionist social theory deserve to be explored in
more detail.

The social evolutionists viewed history as a process of development through the stages of savagery, barbarism, and civilization -- a schema elaborated in Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877). In the early-nineteenth century, scholars had vigorously debated whether mankind's origin was uniformly savage or civilized. Evolutionism is best understood as a counterpoint to the orthodox theological doctrine of degeneration, which held that contemporary primitive cultures are the result of a gradual decline from an original high state of civilization and morality. The evolutionists argued that aboriginal man was universally savage, and that subsequent social change has been generally progressive in character -- although modern-day primitive races had obviously developed comparatively slowly (thus the implicit racial element). While Ogburn rejected the doctrine of evolutionary stages, he retained the evolutionists' emphasis on necessary social progress.

Historian Maurice Mandelbaum observes that

neither Morgan nor Spencer regarded progress as being guided by deliberation, individual decision, or by the moral qualities inherent in man. . . . Throughout his account of mankind's ascent, Morgan emphasizes uniformity and continuity; the accidental, the sporadic, the discontinuous, seem to have no place in his view of progress. 21

Mandelbaum might as well have been describing Ogburn's theory of superorganic accumulation. As we have seen, Ogburn argued that the gradual growth of man's cultural products made certain inventions nearly "inevitable." Like Morgan, Ogburn emphasized
historical continuity rather than the dramatic and contingent path of events associated with the "great man" theory of history.

Again, similar to Ogburn's idea of the accumulation of material culture, the evolutionists' notion of necessary social development rested on the past "growth" of inventions and discoveries (e.g., in pottery, tools, weapons, metalurgy, and shelter). As Mandelbaum observes, "what is unmistakable concerning this technological development is that, from a stage at which all tools were 'rude,' 'simple,' and 'primitive,' they developed in refinement, complexity, and efficiency." 22 This long trend of technological refinement was especially impressive in the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century. During these years, a number of scientific disciplines (i.e., biology, geology, archeology, and ethnology) converged to reinforce the notion that the human past is best viewed as gradual technological development. According to Mandelbaum,

all of the evidence suggested that the accumulation of new tools to satisfy diverse needs had been continuing at an accelerating rate. This point was stressed by [geologist Charles] Lyell and later by [Lewis Henry] Morgan, each of whom claimed that the movement could be assumed to be proceeding at a rate of increase approximating geometric proportions. 23

This geometrical increase was reflected in Ogburn's "law of compound interest" in the growth of material culture.

Evolutionists described a stage-like development of social institutions parallel to the sequential advance of technology. Archeological discoveries provided the first line of evidence for these stages. Material and technological artifacts provided the empirical
spine around which Lewis Henry Morgan reconstructed the
development of institutions such as property law, political structures,
and forms of marriage and kinship. 24 As a result of such
investigations, Morgan arrived at doctrines such as the universal
pattern of matrilineal prior to patrilineal descent, and a primitive
stage of communism and promiscuity prior to other property and
marriage arrangements.

And yet, while archeology shed much light on "material
culture," it could offer only hints about prehistoric social institutions.
According to Mandelbaum,

the historical record was wholly inadequate as a basis for
constructing a general history of mankind; if such a history were
to be constructed it, like evolutionary theory in biology, would
have to rest on indirect evidence. 25

Thus, nineteenth-century ethnologists borrowed the
"comparative method" from biological science. In biology, patterns of
similarity among organisms (such as Darwin found in the Galapagos
Islands), that is, classificatory patterns (i.e., variations existing in the
present), were arranged and placed "end to end" in order to establish
the chronological sequence in which various species and types
developed. Sequence could not be established directly, so biologists
relied on inference from geographic distribution, fossilized remains,
and the existence of vestigial organs. 26 Similarly, the evolutionists
held that the type of social institutions operating at a particular stage
could be discovered by reference to the (known) institutions of other
societies during the same stage. For example, the supposed universal
law that a patrilineal organization always grows out of a matrilineal one made Morgan infer that ancient Greece and Rome must have been matrilineal in their early years. According to critic Robert Lowie, Morgan reached this conclusion despite the lack of direct evidence that a matrilineal stage had occurred in this case.\(^27\) Following the lead of Lowie’s critique, Ogburn rejected both the stage theory and the comparative method. Ogburn carried on, however, the idea of a generally parallel growth which links technology and social institutions. That is, he followed the evolutionist idea that there has always been a type of social arrangement and social philosophy most appropriate (i.e., best "adjusted") to each major advance in technology. The significance of the comparative method will be noted further in our discussion of the doctrine of survivals in this chapter.

Finally, we should note that the "Social Darwinist" notion of Anglo-American superiority -- an idea which was equally common to Morgan, Tylor, and Spencer -- was essential to the progressive, evolutionist view of history. Victorian Britain and America were assumed to be the vanguard, the highest stage, of social and political development. This ethnocentrism, however, did not entail a purely racial superiority. George Stocking has argued that Tylor and Morgan "were essentially cultural anthropologists" who "were not particularly interested in the process of biological [i.e., mental] evolution."\(^{28}\) Thus, the evolutionists were not guilty, as some have charged, of teaching that every ethnic (or racial) group has passed (or is yet to pass), in strict unilinear fashion, through the exact same stages of
development. Stocking contends that social evolutionism was "more a generalization about the overall course of the past development of mankind as a whole. . . ." Evolutionism described "a process by which a multiplicity of human groups developed along lines which moved in general toward the social and cultural forms of western Europe." 29 In the sense which Stocking describes, evolutionist ethnocentricity was not far removed from William Ogburn's unitary and "general" conception of the history of civilization.

The Doctrine of Survivals

It seems apparent that there is a close relationship between the cultural lag hypothesis and the doctrine of survivals -- a doctrine which played an important role in Tylor's social evolution theory. Sociologist Arthur K. Davis and historian Margaret Hodgen, among others, assume that "survival" and "lag" express the same kinds of phenomena, and so they include Ogburn in their discussions of the concept of survivals. Did Ogburn himself, however, identify these two concepts? It is noteworthy that, in Social Change, he kept his discussion of cultural lag separate from his treatment of survivals. And yet, Ogburn did regard survivals as a source of "cultural inertia and conservatism" -- and, in turn, used the concept of "inertia" to explain why cultural lags occur. In a chapter on "reasons for cultural lag," he claimed that "a good deal that was said [i.e., in his discussion of "cultural inertia"] . . . regarding resistance of culture to change is applicable here to the special case of lag. . . ." 30 Ogburn, then, linked
cultural inertia to cultural lag, thus strongly suggesting that the
doctrine of survivals reinforces the lag hypothesis.

Edward B. Tylor originally defined survivals as
processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been
carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different
from that in which they had their original home, and they thus
remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out
of which a newer one has been evolved. 31

As Ogburn correctly pointed out, Tylor's purpose was "not so
much to note or explain a resistance to change as to find in these
survivals evidence of the evolution of culture, and to show that culture
passed through certain stages in the course of evolution." 32 This
observation was echoed by Hodgen, who confirmed that Tylor's
doctrine of survivals served, first and foremost, to reinforce the
comparative method and the stage theory. 33 This primary function of
the survival concept was explained by British anthropologist
Pitt-Rivers, who remarked that today's primitive races (which were
themselves a kind of "survival")

may be taken as the bona fide representatives of the races of
antiquity.... They thus afford us living illustrations of the social
customs, the forms of government, laws, and warlike practices,
which belong to the ancient races from which they remotely
sprang.... 34

If evidence was lacking for a prehistoric (or non-literate) way
of life, "survivals" supplemented archeological data in the historical
reconstruction of that society.

Even though twentieth-century ethnologists repudiated the
stage theory of social evolution, they continued to discover
survival-like phenomena. Franz Boas cited a case in which American
Indians (the Chuckchee) converted from a sedentary to nomadic existence, yet failed to switch from wood huts to tents. Ogburn classified examples of this nature as forms of "culture inertia." This newer definition of the survival concept was well described by Margaret Hodgen:

In short, whenever it has been found desirable . . . to account for the contemporary existence of ideas or actions bearing a more logical, significant, and harmonious relationship to earlier systems of ideas or culture, these illogical and inharmonious 'misfits', thanks to Tylor, have been called survivals.

From what we have seen so far, we may summarize the two functions of Tylor's doctrine of survivals as follows. Primarily, it was an effort to gain knowledge of the past as revealed by "survivals" found in the present. A secondary role of the concept, conversely, was to help explain the present by tracing its past development. Specifically, it is present problems which are illuminated by a knowledge of a survival's original historical and cultural context -- as was suggested by Tylor's well-known declaration that ethnology is "essentially a reformer's science." And while, as we will see, Ogburn and others discarded the original function of the survival doctrine along with the comparative method, they embraced the more reformist, present-oriented perspective.

The revised concept of "survivals" increased in prominence during the decades straddling the turn of the century. Most of the Boasians, because of their rejection of the stage theory, discarded the whole idea of survivals as well -- and referred rather to "cultural inertia" (hence the source of Ogburn's term). Robert Lowie, however,
challenged the new wisdom, and asked "why is an ethnologist damned to perdition for accepting the survivalist position?" Lowie argued that the reality of survivals does not depend on the old interpretive framework. For a definition of survivals which was innocent of the stage theory, Lowie turned to British anthropologist W. H. R. Rivers. Rivers held that "a custom is regarded as a survival, if its nature cannot be explained by its present utility but only becomes intelligible through its past history." Lowie added:

To put it on a less exclusively utilitarian basis, a survival is an element of culture that has become isolated from its organic context and can be understood only by being restored to its proper place. As soon as this definition is grasped, the reality of survivals is illustrated by a thousand instances from our own civilization.

It is significant that Lowie's examples of survivals were quite similar to Ogburn's examples of cultural lag. Lowie referred to the electoral college system of voting, modes of military drill inappropriate for modern warfare, and, "our heritage of medieval legalism" -- this last point reminiscent of Chief Justice Holmes.

While Lowie tried to avoid bringing in the idea of utility, he accordingly neglected to explain how a trait becomes "isolated from its organic context." Ogburn, by contrast, like W. H. R. Rivers, resorted to a generalized idea of "utility." Ogburn drew especially upon the ideas of British anthropologist Robert R. Marett. According to Marett, one of the main ways in which survivals are formed is "de pragmatization," a shift from being socially useful (in the sense of sustaining and protecting life) to being merely ornamental (which is still "useful," yet
in an aesthetic or psychological sense). Ogburn adopted Marett's views on why "survivals" survive, and so declared that certain customs "survive in the sense of living on as a thing of utility rather than as lasting on as skeletal remains." With regard to superstitions, taboos, and prognostics, Ogburn concluded that "whether these survivals be socially useful or not they are certainly not fossils, for they do function in the life of the folk." He hastened to add, however, that such customs "may be socially harmful." Ogburn concluded that

the idea of utility of culture can be assumed, it would seem, in nearly all cases of survival or where culture exists. . . . The utility of the cultural forms means that they satisfy some individual or social want.

Thus, for Ogburn as well as for a number of other revisionists of Tylor's doctrine of survivals, culture persists because it has some type of "utility" or "wantability" (Ogburn suggested that the latter term was more appropriate), whether this persistence is motivated out of habit, laziness, vested interests, or social pressure. This rather all-inclusive notion of utility, then, lies at bottom of all of Ogburn's explanations for the persistence of culture. But Margaret Hodgen, in her critique of survivalistic thinking, made short work of the "utility" viewpoint -- including the version held by Ogburn. To say that survivals have utility "violate[s] the definition of survivals as irrational or useless" declared Hodgen. "The economist [sic] Ogburn ascribed the persistence of culture elements, by definition useless, to their utility." Ogburn thus foundered on the dilemma of explaining
why survivals persist while contending that they are out of step with
the present world. He explained persistence in terms of "wantability,"
but suggested that what was "wanted" was often not good. He
affirmed, for example, that medical superstitions provide
psychological comfort to country folk, yet immediately pointed out
their potential for harming one's health. Ogburn apparently did not
view the "utility" of all cultural elements as equally useful. That is, he
found many expressions of cultural inertia (i.e., many "wantables") to
be quite undesirable. Ogburn's concept of cultural utility was thus a
failed attempt to explain what, as Hodgen argued, was still the great
unsolved puzzle: how can inertia and progress exist side by side -- that
is, what makes "survivals" survive while other things change?

The explanation for Ogburn's inconsistency on this point lay in
his reformist social agenda. That Ogburn's treatment of the survival
concept served an ideological purpose -- to persuasively convey this
agenda -- is clearly seen in his opening comments on "cultural inertia
and conservatism:" "There certainly is a resistance to change as any
modern social reformer will testify. Why is it so difficult to change
culture for those who wish to make progress?" Ogburn observed,
similarly, that an explanation of cultural inertia "is of especial
importance for theories of progress and of particular interest to those
who are attempting to control and direct social changes toward social
progress." (Italics mine.) In other words, while all culture has
"wantability" for at least someone (i.e., some subgroup among the
populace), much that survives from the past is highly questionable
from the standpoint of the early-twentieth-century social scientist.

The doctrine of survivals, then, was a strategy to historicize the social ideals which divided the scientist-reformer (in the tradition of Edward B. Tylor) from others with opposing views. This evolutionist and historicist approach to social critique, along with its implications for cultural lag, will be explored further in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
THE LOGIC OF HISTORICISM

The late-nineteenth-century school of social evolutionism bequeathed some basic assumptions about social change to American thinkers of the succeeding generation. As we have seen, the evolutionists viewed history in "ideal" terms, as an epic of progress centered around the growth of man's tool-making abilities. They also sought to discover the parallel development of institutional life, and thus promoted the idea that institutions and ideas function best when "adapted" to the current level of technological evolution. These assumptions were taken over by the early-twentieth-century "anti-formalist" thinkers such as Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, and James Harvey Robinson -- who were active during the time that Ogburn developed and first published his social theory. The historicist approach to social critique employed by these writers formed the intellectual context for -- and clearly anticipated -- Ogburn's hypothesis of cultural lag.

Veblen and the Use of Survivals

A minor mystery arises concerning Ogburn's relationship to Thorstein Veblen, since a number of writers have attributed the lag hypothesis to Veblen's direct influence. For example, in describing Veblen's view of the leisure class and its institutions as one great "archaic" survival, Talcott Parsons noted that "the most recent variant of the general theory is the 'culture lag' theory of Ogburn. The
resemblance is so striking that it almost certainly owes much to Veblen."¹ As we have seen, however, Ogburn himself declared that he was "quite sure there was no direct taking over of the idea from Veblen because I had never read him on this point."² The similarity of the two "lag" concepts, however, can be explained without assuming that Ogburn was directly influenced by Veblen. Sociologist Arthur K. Davis put the matter in proper perspective when he argued that

Veblen did not originate the . . . cultural lag approach; the idea is central in Marx and in the emphasis on 'survival' evident in the Darwinian and other evolutionary trends in social science.³

Davis' analysis suggests that both Ogburn and Veblen drew inspiration from the same nineteenth-century tradition -- the progressivist view of society and history common to Marxian historical theory and to evolutionist sociology.⁴ This common root is significant because it allowed for the "simultaneous independent invention" of cultural lag by Veblen and Ogburn. Such a convergence of thinking suggests that the lag idea was "in the air" in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century social science.⁵ As one might expect in the case of an intellectual consensus such as this, major thinkers other than Ogburn and Veblen shared this general historicist outlook on social problems -- and so prepared a receptive audience for Ogburn's lag hypothesis. In order to explore the implications of this shared view of social maladjustment, we will begin by sketching Veblen's views on the role of "survivals" in social evolution.

Veblen divided social evolution into two main phases: the prehistoric "savage state" and the subsequent "predatory society."
Predatory society, in turn, has two stages: the barbaric era and the "pecuniary" or post-medieval era. Veblen pictured the original savage state as a prehistoric golden age, in which men were led by their benevolent impulses (i.e., "instincts") of workmanship, the parental bent, and idle curiosity. 6 The savage state consisted of a hunting and gathering economy, which, with improved tool-making and the invention of agriculture, eventually produced an economic surplus. 7 These advances produced the first organized social life, which consisted of property relations, social classes, the state, priesthoods, and war. Thus emerged barbarian society -- the ancient empires and the Medieval era -- characterized by direct (military and priestly) coercion. 8 The final stage, pecuniary society, represents the modern era of handicraft, then machine, economies, and is characterized by indirect exploitation -- except for instances of barbarian survivals, such as the leisure class.

In his first book, The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899), Veblen reasoned that present conflicts in social values are the result of savage instincts juxtaposed with predatory traits in the modern psyche. That is, he regarded practices such as "pecuniary emulation" or "conspicuous consumption" as traits surviving from the barbarian period. On the other hand, "the circumstances of life and the ends of effort that prevailed before the advent of the barbarian culture, shaped human nature and fixed it as regards certain fundamental traits." 9 Veblen argued that traces of these peaceable traits are evident, not in current social practices, but as "psychological survivals, in the way of
persistent and pervading traits of human character." 10 Noble instincts (e.g., the instinct of workmanship) have persisted to a degree in modern society, even though they are "in great part alien to the methods and the animus of barbarian life." 11

The significance, for our purposes, of Veblen's theory of historical stages is the explanation it offers for the simultaneous existence of both benevolent instincts and evil institutions. Veblen maintained that all social institutions are predatory, are wasteful, and are "survivals" from earlier historical epochs. Instincts, on the other hand, guided men's behavior in the savage state and might do so again if they could be freed from the corrupting influence of predatory institutions. 12 Like Ogburn, Veblen suggested that social problems result from the failure of institutions and organizations to keep pace with industrial innovation. Sociologist Arthur K. Davis notes that Veblen often contrasted the still-surviving eighteenth-century institutional framework of private property and national sovereignty with the twentieth-century 'machine process' of industrial production, which was severely restricted . . . by its archaic eighteenth-century institutional context. 13

These historicist and progressivist presuppositions are stressed by David Riesman, in his analysis of the lag idea as employed by Veblen and Ogburn:

Veblen, like Marx, interpreted socialism as an effort on the part of the rest of the culture to catch up with the machine-made industrial revolution. William Fielding Ogburn, who moved from economics into sociology, has since made the concept of 'cultural lag' familiar, and indeed Americans are often more than ready to grant that their religious, political and other 'peripheral' doings are behind-hand in comparison with economic and technological
advance. The very term 'lag,' which Veblen uses, implies a value-judgement in spite of itself, since to delay, linger, and wait is in the American idiom a sign not of sound conservative judgement but of backwardness. Yet Veblen repeatedly disclaims making such a value-judgement. . . .

Nevertheless, argues Riesman,

in spite of his disclaimer, Veblen does ally himself, more or less unequivocally, with the progress-minded thinking of the nineteenth-century rationalist. He envisages a society cleansed by the machine and its presumptive accompanying cast of thought of all ritual, reliquary, and rite. 15

The attitude which Riesman detects, of regarding the past (or rather, a particular past epoch) as the exclusive source of what is bad today was indeed a quintessential progressivist assumption.

The Revolt Against Formalism

Other thinkers, in addition to Veblen and the social evolutionists who preceded him, shared Ogburn's historicist -- and organicist -- view of social reality. In Social Thought in America (1947), Morton White describes a "revolt against formalism" which was led by philosopher John Dewey, historian James Harvey Robinson, political scientist Charles A. Beard, jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., as well as economist Veblen. The thesis of "revolt," taken by itself, is of only limited use as a historical category, since "formalism" is ill-defined, and indeed rather abstract and ahistorical -- i.e., too formalistic! The main value of White's analysis lies in the two positive traits which he says characterized the anti-formalists, historicism and cultural organicism:

By 'historicism' I shall mean the attempt to explain facts by reference to earlier facts; by 'cultural organicism' I mean the
attempt to find explanations and relevant material in social sciences other than the one which is primarily under investigation. 16

These two concepts were the intellectual warp and woof, not only of Morton White's subjects, but of Ogburn as well. The lag hypothesis presupposes the imbeddedness of a social practice within a particular cultural and historical context. Some highlights from White's discussion of the "revolt against formalism" will point up this movement's strong resemblance to Ogburn's social theory.

According to White, Edward B. Tylor's doctrine of survivals was an influential precursor of anti-formalist thinking. Like that of Holmes and Dewey, Tylor's view of the past was shaped by an interest in progressive change. "In the case of Tylor, the study of primitive culture is motivated, in part, by a desire to ferret out just these elements of his own culture which are mere survivals from a more backward and less civilized age," White declared. 17 Tylor expressed this desire to purge the present of outmoded cultural traits when he concluded his major work, Primitive Culture (1871), with this statement: "Thus, active at once in aiding progress and in removing hindrance, the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science." 18 Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. drew upon Tylor's idea of survivals in his book The Common Law (1881). The idea was also found in Dewey and Tuft's Ethics (1908), which, according to White,

pointed out that the moral life was filled with rudiments and survivals. Some of our present standards and ideals were formed at one period in the past, and some at another; some applied to the conditions of 1908, some didn't. . . . Dewey and Tufts were
clearly subscribing to Tylor's conviction that anthropology was a
reformer's science. 19

In addition to tracing the influence of the survival concept on
the anti-formalists, White shows that their thought implied what can
best be described as a concept of "lag:"

This was a root idea which tightly joined Dewey, Robinson, and
Veblen -- the idea that there would come a day when the
scientific outlook dictated by the great industrial transformation
of modern times would be communicated to politics and law. And
if the industrial locomotive did not succeed in communicating its
speed to morality -- the cultural caboose -- Dewey and Robinson
were prepared to help haul the lazy cars of morality and social
philosophy, to give them some of the velocity of economics and
industry, to grease the wheels of progress. 20

The idea of industry's likely failure to "communicate its speed"
to politics, law, and finally morals, strongly suggests the idea of
cultural lag. It should not escape our notice that the "caboose" --
morality and social philosophy -- was the same as the final link in
Ogburn's "four-chain sequence" of institutional change.

The concept of cultural lag is found not only in the
early-twentieth-century generation of "anti-formalists," but can also be
seen in the earlier use of "historicism" and "cultural organicism."
Morton White gives a brief nod to the roots of historicism and
organicism growing out of "the ideas [change, process, history, and
culture] which dominated the nineteenth century. . . . the century of
Comte, Darwin, Hegel, Marx, and Spencer." 21 Even apart from
White's discussion, we can see that cultural organicism and
historicism, as well as the idea of lag itself, were manifest in Marxian
thesis. As Maurice Mandelbaum argues, "like Hegel, and like Comte,
the organism to which he [Marx] subscribed merged with his
Cultural organicism is implied, first, by the interrelatedness of productive forces (skills, knowledge, tools, technology, and labor supply) and relations of production (the system of ownership and distribution of the productive forces). This combined "material base" is also organically related to the ideological superstructure -- which includes forms of political, legal, philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic life. The presupposition of organic interdependence implied a potential for tensions (eventually involving all facets of society) to occur any time that the forces of production undergo sufficient improvement:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production. . . . From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.

What is significant about this statement is that it shows the "time-bound" nature of all cultural products, which is the logical result of so close a theoretical interdependence within the cultural whole. Marx concluded that all ideological manifestations are "historical and transitory products," and so expressed an idea which would be a fundamental presupposition of Ogburn's cultural lag hypothesis.

To the extent, then, that the concepts of historicism and organicism were inseparable in Marx's theory of social change, to which Ogburn's lag thesis bears obvious ties (much closer than its ties to the simplified version of Marxism seen in Ogburn's "technological interpretation of history"), this reinforces our contention that Ogburn's thought was firmly rooted in the nineteenth-century version
of progressivism.

The Temporalization of Values

It is necessary to get a more precise definition of historicism, the guiding concept behind the style of social critique discussed in the present chapter. Mandelbaum defines the historicist method as

the belief that an adequate understanding of the nature of any phenomenon and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained through considering it in terms of the place which it occupied and the role which it played within a process of development. 26

The remainder of the present chapter will explore this "assessment of value" as an especially important link between historicism generally and the hypothesis of cultural lag.

The historicism and organicism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially as expressed in survival and lag theories, led to what may be called a "temporalization of values." Temporalization means tracing ideas and practices to their original historical context, and thus identifying them with temporal categories. Values, in turn, represents present-day contrasts of ideas or practices. This temporal emphasis in social thought arose from attempts to explain the source of variation. According to historian F. J. Teggart, eighteenth-century biology and geology "achieved the notable result of envisaging the differences with which we are confronted in the present world as the product of changes which have taken place in the past." 27 The nineteenth-century evolutionists borrowed this natural science perspective in order to discover "survivals" -- that is,
to view present cultural diversity through the lens of temporal differences. Thorstein Veblen, in turn, applied the concept of survivals to explain the conflict of values between the "instinct of workmanship" and the survival of "barbaric" pecuniary waste. According to Margaret Hodgen, Veblen interpreted this modern social tension "in accordance with the procedure of the Tylorian school of anthropology. In other words, he envisaged the social whole, and its two major divisions, as the outcome of a developmental process . . . ." 29 Even though Veblen presented a highly speculative reconstruction of pre-historic culture, there were (and are) many valid examples of this historicist understanding of social tensions, as seen in Dewey's and Holmes' use of the survival concept to point out deficiencies in late-nineteenth century education and law.

Another example of the temporalization of values is seen in John Dewey's use of the "genetic method" in his book Reconstruction in Philosophy (1920). Dewey used this approach to critique the philosophic formalism of the ancient Greeks. He charged that formal philosophy, throughout its long history, had expressed, and indeed had sought to justify, existing social conditions. Plato's politics, for example, founded upon an elitist and slavery-based social system, was irrelevant in today's world. Dewey offered this candid remark concerning his critical aims: "It seems to me that this genetic method of approach is a more effective way of undermining this [formalistic] type of philosophic theorizing than any attempt at logical refutation could be." 31 As Morton White commented, "Dewey was quite explicit
in his aims. He wanted to 'undermine' this tradition and he found it
easier to do so by revealing its alleged roots and motives than by
'logical refutation.' " 32

Like Dewey, historian James Harvey Robinson employed the
genetic method and anticipated Ogburn's hypothesis -- even to the
point of using the word "lag;"

many widespread notions could by no possibility have originated
in modern times, but have arisen in conditions quite alien to
those of the present. . . . Only a study of the vicissitudes of human
opinion can make us fully aware of this and enable us to readjust
our views so as to adapt them to our present environment. If it be
ture . . . that opinion tends, in the dynamic age in which we live,
to lag far behind our changing environment, how can we better
discover the anachronisms in our views and in our attitude toward
the world than by studying their origin? 34

Robinson later justified, like Dewey, the evangelistic purpose
behind his genetic method:

We are all endowed with defense mechanisms which operate
automatically. It is a poor technic when attempting to convert
one's neighbor to attack his beliefs directly, especially those of the
sacred variety. We may flatter ourselves that we are undermining
them by our potent reasoning only to find that we have shored
them up so that they are firmer than ever. Often history will work
where nothing else will. It very gently modifies one's attitude.
Refutations are weak compared with its mild but potent
operation. (Italics mine.) 35

"Temporalization," then, was not a method of social critique,
supplementary to reasoned argument, but the method. As Robinson
remarked, "history . . . is the sovereign solvent of prejudice and the
necessary preliminary to readjustments and reforms." (Italics
mine.) 36

The above examples from Veblen, Dewey, and Robinson reflect
two presuppositions which were shared by Ogburn and the
anti-formalist thinkers. First, today's cultural conflicts represent temporally-separate and contrasting social conditions. These contrasting eras may both be in the past, as in the tension between Veblen’s Savage State (with its benevolent instincts) and the barbarian stage (with its predatory habits). On the other hand, cultural conflicts may be viewed simply as a contrast between past and present -- the pattern behind Ogburn’s lag hypothesis. To say, for example, that workingmen's compensation laws "lag behind" factory work conditions is to say that legal forms, in this case the doctrine of owner’s liability, are "surviving" from a cultural context which is dead and gone. Sociologist F. Stuart Chapin made this idea explicit when he described how Ogburn’s lag hypothesis applies to the role of the church in modern times:

Some say the church is out of date because it fails to face the issues of public ownership of the natural resources, the taxation of incomes and inheritances, and other questions of industrial society -- for the church is still adapted to the conditions of a primitive agricultural economy under which it originated. (Italics mine.)

Chapin’s statement reveals, more forthrightly than did Ogburn’s examples, the temporal-conflict assumption which is nearly always implicit in the lag theory. Similarly, in their landmark study Middletown (1929), Robert and Helen Lynd used a vivid temporal expression when they claimed that "groups within the city live in different eras in the performance of ... life-activities." (Italics mine.) (The Lynd’s statement, we should note, came as part of their application of lag theory to their empirical findings.) To say that
groups "live in different eras" is a metaphoric way of highlighting cultural differences -- and of attributing those differences solely to a (alleged) contrast in age.

Ogburn, Dewey, et al also shared the assumption that once one side of a conflict is identified with past conditions, its desirability or utility is automatically called into question. Here it is crucial to note that, prior to the advent of workingmen's compensation, the old concept of owner's liability existed in the present just as much as did the new factory work conditions. To say, then, that these co-existing factors are in a "lag" relation to one another is to first assume a particular and restricted definition of the "present." This is the implication of sociologist C. Wright Mills' astute critique of the lag hypothesis: "Even though all the situations called 'lags' exist in the present, their functional realities are referred back, away from the present. Evaluations are thus translated into a time sequence. . . ." 30 (We will consider Mills' analysis in more depth in a later chapter.)

"Cultural lag," then, translates value conflicts into distinctions of a purely temporal nature, which handily gives a rhetorical advantage to whichever party to a conflict identifies itself with the progressive "present." A restricted conception of the present -- with its underlying polemical appeal -- was conveyed in James Harvey Robinson's claim that "many widespread notions could by no possibility have originated in modern times, but have arisen in conditions quite alien to those of the present." (Italics mine.) 39 Robinson implied that such "notions" are themselves "alien to the present" -- even
though (paradoxically) they are still widely entertained. In other words, certain current customs or beliefs may actually "belong" to another time, because they do not comport with the particular standard by which "presentness" has been designated. Ogburn betrayed this kind of temporal pigeonholing when he declared that "many ideas belonging to a time when change was much slower or even imperceptible hang over into an era of rapid change and act as a barrier to successful adjustment." (Italics mine.) The standard for the normative present is set, of course, by the writer, the one who identifies what cultural traits are to be classed as "survivals," or what things are "lagging" behind.

Theories of survival and cultural lag thus achieve critical evaluation by means of "temporal distancing," a concept which is featured in Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* (1983). According to Fabian, anthropology's "manifold and muddled uses of Time" have often served "the purpose of distancing those who are observed from the Time of the observer." In other words, time has been used by anthropologists as a medium by which to gain a sense of scholarly control over peoples and conditions which differ from modern Western culture. Fabian argues that anthropology's temporal categories, such as "primitive," result in a "denial of coevalness." This "denial" is the implicit suggestion that contemporaneous Western and non-Western cultures do not share the same historical epoch. More relevant to the lag hypothesis, Fabian shows that coevalness is sometimes denied within Western culture:
As distancing devices, categorizations of this kind are used, for instance, when we are told that certain elements in our culture are 'neolithic' or 'archaic'; or when certain living societies are said to practice 'stone age economics'; or when certain styles of thought are identified as 'savage' or 'primitive.'

Similarly, to describe a situation as producing cultural lag is essentially to claim (and thus to make an evaluation) that some cultural features are more "present" than others. Logically, there can be no competing definitions of the present, since any rival conceptions of reality would be de facto relegated to the past.

This ideological conception of "the present" appears in Simon Patten's The Development of English Thought (1899). While Patten's stated goal was to "measure English social progress," he also registered his disapproval of many outdated social practices:

It is assumed that we are adjusted to the present environment in which great changes in thought have occurred. . . . Yet so long as colleges try to inspire higher ideals by forcing students to learn Greek, so long as teachers of ethics endeavour to reform the slums by instilling the platitudes of ancient moralists [etc.] . . . it can hardly be said that adjustment to present conditions is complete. If these be permanent tendencies, the influence of the present environment can never be fully revealed in history. (Italics mine.)

Patten claimed, essentially, that "the present" is somehow not fully realized at this particular time, and perhaps may never be. How could such a thing be possible? Only if one assumes the limited and partisan view of the present suggested by a temporalization of values. Patten tipped his hand when he admitted that, given his assumptions about what constitutes the "present," it is quite possible for the "present environment" to not be "fully revealed." Patten's formulation of the issue is the corollary of the suggestion, seen in other examples.
here, that some social practices or beliefs actually belong to a different time. Rather than explaining (as did Dewey and Robinson) a perceived social problem or maladjustment in terms of the past surviving into the present, Patten achieved the same effect by claiming that the present itself is rather incomplete. Although Patten did not did not put great stress on this theme, his argument illustrates an absurd use of the logic of "temporalization."

Patten refined his views somewhat in The New Basis of Civilization (1907). He used an "age" theory, similar to Veblen's, to explain that mental habits continue long after the economic conditions which fashioned them have disappeared, and popular beliefs reflect the passing age of nature's deficit, while the actions of men who hold those beliefs are chiefly governed by the new age of surplus in which we live. The economic revolution is here, but the intellectual revolution that will rouse men to its stupendous meaning has not yet done its work. (Italics mine.)

Patten held, in other words, that man's social philosophy lags behind his economic progress. As usual, the ensuing gap between old beliefs and new conditions is the sole explanation of how the present becomes split into warring camps.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the language of "survival" and "lag" became a rhetorical strategy which carried vivid force, yet was often used as a substitute for reasoned arguments. At its worst, this historicist approach relies on imputing a crude guilt-by-association with the past -- which tends to submerge present conflict-causing factors such as exploitation and class interest. It is important to note, therefore, that reasonable arguments can be given
for social reforms apart from those supplied by the genetic method.
This is true in the case of workingman's compensation, in which there
are "good reasons" for rejecting the conservative view of owner's
liability. Ogburn's use of statistics on industrial accidents, for example,
was quite relevant to arguing the injustice of the old legal form. Yet,
for Ogburn, it was of only secondary importance to argue that the old
liability law was unjust. Ogburn employed quantitative evidence in this
and other similar cases to buttress his primary contention -- that a
"cultural lag" had occurred! In finding fault, then, with the ideological
and partisan nature of this "temporalization of values," one need not
disparage Ogburn's reformism. In order to supplement historicist
argument, however, "good reasons" for reforms will ultimately involve
appeals to timeless principles such as the demands of justice or
equity or intrinsic human worth. While a historicist perspective is a
necessary and helpful supplement to argument from principles, the
early-twentieth-century vogue of temporalization made historicism the
preferred approach to questions of ethics and value.

We have seen in this chapter that Ogburn's cultural lag
hypothesis was an expression of early-twentieth-century historicism.
Ogburn obviously drew upon ideas which were common among the
Progressive-era anti-formalist thinkers -- and he enjoyed the benefits
which went with having such famous relations. This
progressivist-historicist tradition continued on into the 1920's and
30's -- the earlier decade being the heyday of Dewey et al's
historicism, and the latter period being the height of Ogburn's
influence. Ogburn obviously owed much to the historicist tradition. And yet, there was something distinctive about his hypothesis, something inherent in the term "lag" itself. The next chapter will explore this peculiar rhetorical power of the lag concept -- its distinctive capacity to be used in progressivist social critique, while appearing at the same time to preserve the sociologist's scientific objectivity.
CHAPTER 6
THE RHETORIC OF "LAG"

It is clear that William Ogburn was not an original thinker in the realm of social theory. As we have seen in the preceding two chapters, Ogburn carried on the evolutionist and historicist views of social change and social inertia -- views which had been "in the air" since the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Historicism, moreover, often expressed itself in what we have called the "temporalization of values," an approach to discourse about social conflicts which included the "lag" idea. Closely related to the temporalization of values was the quintessential Progressive-era goal of social "adaptation" or "adjustment" -- a goal which Ogburn and other progressivist thinkers such as Veblen, Dewey, and Robinson clearly shared.

And yet, while Ogburn added nothing new to the logic of historicism, he did contribute to its language. His rhetoric of "lag" suggested that social problems are analogous to malfunctions of an almost physical or mechanical kind. Since Ogburn's hypothesis was built around the term "lag," it conveyed the air of objective analysis, and made its implicit social critique seem like empirical social science.

**A Metaphor for Progressivism**

Ogburn's hypothesis gave expression to the desire among many social thinkers for scientifically-planned social progress. This desire
was encouraged by the belief that progress was already a fact of life in the scientific and technological realms. ¹ That progressivist assumptions undergirded the lag hypothesis -- and recommended it for approval -- is indeed suggested in reviews of Ogburn's first book. One reviewer questioned Ogburn's views on social change generally, yet declared that "with the discussion of cultural inertia Professor Ogburn enters a less controversial field. His demonstration of the failure of adaptive culture to keep pace with the change of material culture is on the whole clear and convincing. . . . " ² Another reviewer described the lag hypothesis as dealing with the "problem of conservatism. Why does culture resist change so successfully and therefore stand in the way of the march of progress?" ³

As the social science literature of the early twentieth century shows, it was common for thinkers to stress the need for adaptation or adjustment to the most progressive part of the human environment. Sociologist Charles A. Ellwood, writing in the 1920's, called for a "better adjustment of all factors in the life of a group . . . to a wider, more universal environment." ⁴ Wharton School economist Scott Nearing developed this "adjustment" theme in the pre-war years. Nearing declared that "social adjustment is in any age an approximation of the normal; but with invention and progress, education and evolution, the potentiality of each age is one step in advance of the normal of the past age. As possibilities increase the normal standard of society moves forward." ⁵ Maladjustments which Nearing said were remediable included factory accidents, low wages,
uniformity in education, congestion of population, and the subordination of women. 6 Another Progressive-era social scientist wrote a book to demonstrate that "the doctrine of adaptation is coming more and more to be considered as the key to social philosophy and its manifold problems. . . ." 7

The theme of adjustment appeared also in James Harvey Robinson's essay "The New History" (1912). Robinson observed that our habits of thought change much more slowly than our environment and are usually far in arrears. We are . . . in constant danger of viewing present problems with obsolete emotions and of attempting to settle them by obsolete reasoning. This is one of the chief reasons why we are never by any means perfectly adjusted to our environment. 8

In this and similar statements, Robinson clearly anticipated Ogburn's lag thesis. Indeed, in a recent analysis, historian John Higham has associated Robinson's outlook with a cluster of interrelated progressivist ideas, including cultural lag, cultural relativism, and adjustment:

In keeping with Veblen's [sic] theory of cultural lag and with Dewey's attack on absolute truth, Robinson acclaimed intellectual history as the best means of exposing the transient, relative nature of hallowed beliefs and so enabling us to keep our thinking abreast of changes in our environment. 9

Thus, if Ogburn's hypothesis was not especially original, it was for that very reason quite plausible, since it shared the authoritative views of Dewey, Veblen, and Robinson.

In spite of the fact that Ogburn's hypothesis was yet another expression of early-twentieth-century progressivism, it was nevertheless clothed in a distinctive guise. As we noted in the
preceding chapter, the cultural lag hypothesis was representative of 
what one writer calls "temporal distancing." "Distance" is an especially 
appropriate word for describing how the lag thesis (as distinct from 
Dewey's genetic method or Veblen's and Robinson's use of survivals) 
depicts history and society. The doctrine of survivals, upon analysis, 
chiefly involves temporalization: traits from the past are found to 
survive into the present. (The metaphoric element in "survivals" is 
biological; the allusion to vestigial traits assumes biological 
development, yet does not convey a strong sense of progress.) The 
metaphor of lag, however, while it encompasses the time factor found 
in survivals, adds the element of spatialization. In other words, "lag" 
depicts the progression of time as if it were movement through space. 
Specifically, the lag metaphor implies that the norm for social change 
is movement forward; it conveys a picture of unilinear evolutionary 
development. Space and linear movement, then, in addition to a time 
element, are embedded in the very notion of a "lag." Admittedly, the 
convention of representing time as movement (e.g., "the passage of 
time"), by itself, sheds little light on Ogburn's hypothesis, since such 
expression is commonplace in Western culture. It is also common to 
speak as if there was a purely spatial "division" or "split" between 
groups adhering to contrasting values (each group presenting a 
different "position"). But this figure of speech, which conveys a 
picture of divided space, omits the linear (i.e., temporal) dimension 
found in Ogburn's metaphor. Since all "positions" are thus relativized 
(i.e., represented as points on a featureless plane), this formulation is
purely descriptive, and lacks the capacity for critique.

The cultural lag hypothesis, however, combines both temporal and spatial terms. It conveys an evaluation, not merely a portrayal, of value distinctions. One encounters the language of lag when a custom is derided for being "backward" or "behind the times." Indeed, once we use the word "lag," and "behind" naturally suggests itself. As sociologist Malcolm Willey observed in describing Ogburn’s hypothesis, "one set of traits lags behind the development of the other." 10 Ogburn, moreover, articulated the full range of his metaphor when he declared that "technology moves forward and the social institution lags behind in varying degrees." 11 Ogburn thus combined the temporalization of values with the "spatialization" of values. The single term "lag" fused the assumption that time carries cultural progress along with it, and the conventional description of progress as movement forward (e.g., "advance"). Ogburn thus implied (even when the lag label was used without any extra comment) that things which do not conform to forward movement must have originated at an earlier time, and are therefore nonprogressive and undesirable.

Ogburn’s combination metaphor helps explain why his hypothesis enjoyed widespread use when other, similar approaches to social analysis were overlooked. We saw in the previous chapter how various kinds of historicist social pathology anticipated the lag hypothesis. Two Progressive-era theories which have not already been mentioned were close anticipations of Ogburn’s thesis in both time and content, yet did not have near the impact of "cultural lag" on
sociological thought. By a brief review of these examples, we may highlight the distinctive expressiveness of the "lag" metaphor.

In 1915, Albert G. Keller anticipated Ogburn's lag thesis with his notion of a "strain toward consistency" between different parts of culture. Keller was a student and the successor of William Graham Sumner, one of the founders of American sociology, at Yale University. According to one historian of sociology, Keller "was probably the first to suggest, on the foundation of Sumner's ideas, that social change naturally produces maladjustment, since the folkways and mores of a group change at differing rates" and are thus "continually getting out of adjustment." 12 The author went so far as to claim that Ogburn merely popularized Keller's theory, "with the aid of a felicitous phrase, 'the cultural lag.'" 13 What Ogburn contributed, however, was not merely a euphonious label, but rather the ability of that label to embody liberal-progressivist social critique.

Keller pointed out a distinction between what he called "primary" or "maintenance" mores (parallel to Ogburn's material culture) and "secondary mores," such as marriage and kinship patterns, religion, etc. He also described a lag-time and maladjustment between changes in the primary and secondary mores. In contrast to Ogburn, however, Keller regarded this lag-time not as a problem, but as a beneficent goad toward social adjustment. Keller noted that

the introduction of the factory-system seemed to throw the whole organization of society into disorder and chaos... But this phenomenon means no more than the falling out of adjustment of
the secondary forms with the primary. An access of pain and want -- the unmistakable sign of maladaptation -- promptly ensued and forced the secondary forms into better adjustment with the primary. The former had to catch up, so to speak, with the latter. (italics mine.)

Even though his words "catch up" implied the lag metaphor, Keller did not emphasize the period of lag. Instead, he focused on how maladaptation, with the chaos and suffering it brings, always forces a "prompt" readjustment -- and so he called his theory the "strain toward consistency." This was an essentially complacent, non-reformist, and uncritical position. The contrast between Keller's conservatism and the liberal social thought dominant in the Progressive era helps to explain why Ogburn's hypothesis caught on whereas the "strain toward consistency" did not.

Edward A. Ross, a sociologist in the dominant liberal tradition (as opposed to Sumner and Keller), wrote in 1920 about the phenomenon of "ossification." Ross cited vivid examples of how "society" (never specifically defined) changes while many of its institutions and practices remain the same. Ross explained that after a social practice or institution has existed for a generation or two, it is off its original basis of sound reason and will be retained even in a situation so changed that it has no justification whatever. . . . The process, then, by which social institutions and arrangements lose adaptability and harden into rigid forms may be called *ossification*.  

Although Ross listed factors such as "mental laziness" and "conservatism" as causes of institutional inertia, "ossification" was essentially a descriptive category. Apparently, Ross wanted to do just enough to call attention to the phenomena so that efforts could then
be focused on practical amelioration. 16 This concept of "ossification," coming from a leading sociologist, again suggests that the ideas of social inertia and maladjustment were quite prominent before Ogburn wrote on the subject.

And yet, however much these and other concepts approximated Ogburn's lag hypothesis, they lacked its distinguishing feature: social critique embodied in a synthesis of spatial and temporal expression. Ross's "ossification" was restricted to an essentially spatial metaphor, since it evoked the image of an inflexible mold which does not adapt to change. Unlike Ogburn, moreover, Ross’s norm to which institutions must adapt (i.e., "society") was vague and less overtly progressive than was Ogburn's "technology." On the other hand, similar critical stances by Veblen, Dewey, Robinson, and Patten involved "temporalization" yet lacked the spatial dimension. Due to the rhetoric of "lag," Ogburn's hypothesis conveyed, better than any other formulation, the assumptions of progressivist optimism and historicist social criticism.

**Social Scientists as Managers**

Progressivist optimism and social criticism, as they appeared in early-twentieth-century liberal social thought, emphasized the need for trained expertise. For this reason, progressivist theories continued to be quite attractive to many social scientists concerned to make their disciplines "relevant." In *The Promise of American Life* (1909), social critic Herbert Croly argued that social progress could
arise only with help from "the beneficent activities of expert social engineers." 17 Sociologist Charles Ellwood also linked mankind's hopes for progress to the skills of the social scientist:

The perfecting of the instruments of social progress depends ... largely upon the development of the social sciences, and especially of sociology. Only the development of these sciences can give assurance of continued social progress, and even of avoiding catastrophe. Humanity will be able to secure control over itself and over physical nature only with the fuller knowledge of social relations which the development of the social sciences can give to us. 18

Wharton School sociologist James H. S. Bossard also expressed this faith in progress via social control:

Upon closer scrutiny, it will be seen that this idea of control is the very core of the modern concept of progress and of the all but universal faith in its promotion. Only if man can direct, in some measure at least, his collective destiny ... can there be progress. 19

Bossard, we should note, claimed that this faith in social progress, that is, progress based on rational planning, was "all but universal."

Historian Christopher Lasch neatly describes the tendency, suggested in the above statements, to conceive of social progress largely in terms of expert social "management." For many Progressive-era thinkers, Lasch noted, "conflict itself, rather than injustice or inequity, was the evil to be eradicated. ... It was a problem of management rather than morals." 20 A quintessential statement of the "management" ideal appeared, significantly, in a favorable review of Ogburn's lag hypothesis. Sociologist Michael Choukas claimed that the cardinal need of mankind is the possession of a well-integrated culture. ... The really fundamental, radical, social
problems are not those of crime, poverty, unemployment and
other such symptoms of cultural disintegration, but those of
conflicting cultural unit-trait. . . . 21

To Choukas, then, evils such as "injustice" or "inequity" were
mere "symptoms" of cultural maladjustment. Choukas also stressed
that effecting adjustments required expert supervision:

Such problems [i.e., of cultural maladjustment] cannot be handled
haphazardly, nor by just anybody. . . . The discovery of lags, the
shifting and reshifting of traits, the checking and rechecking of
their functions, the general manipulation of our culture pattern,
all the details involved in the process of rationally and consciously
amending and directing the evolution of culture, will have to be
done by men trained in the social sciences, and disciplined in the
spirit (or habit) of scientific objectivity. 22

In other words, social management required trained managers
-- who, moreover, were distinguished by their "objectivity."

Ogburn's own interest in social control is apparent in that he
conceived of "adjustment" not only as a condition to be recognized, but
also as a goal to be pursued. In his explanation of the lag hypothesis,
Ogburn declared that

since there is a correlation and interdependence of parts, a rapid
change in one part of our culture requires readjustments through
other changes in the various correlated parts of culture. For
instance, industry and education are correlated, hence a change
in industry makes adjustment necessary through changes in the
education system. . . . It is desirable to reduce the period of
maladjustment, to make the cultural adjustments as quickly as
possible. (Italics mine.) 23

Similarly, in the government-sponsored study Recent Social
Trends (1933), Ogburn asserted that the
slow accumulation of mechanical inventions through most of the
last half million years and its rapid acceleration during the period
of modern history have led to a new environment to which
modern man must adjust, quite different from the flora and fauna
of nature. (Italics mine.) 24
While maladjustment was a problem to be identified, adjustment was the solution to be implemented. The subtle implication was that the same class of people which accomplished the former was best equipped to bring about the latter as well. As Dorothy Ross observed, Ogburn's objectivist social theory, like that of many other twentieth century social scientists, had "utilitarian" (i.e., self-serving) value, since it helped justify an enlarged role for sociology and the sociologist. 25

Many of the appeals for expert social "management," were legitimated, at least in part, by sociologist's claims to scientific "objectivity." Around the time of the First World War, American social scientists began to seek higher standards of scientific rigor and empiricism in their investigations. L. L. Bernard heralded the new "objective viewpoint in sociology" in 1919, not long before Ogburn published Social Change. Bernard was responding to demands for more rigorous "objective and impersonal measurement" to replace deductive social theory and subjective value standards in sociology. 26 While he applauded this desire, Bernard sought a middle path; a way to combine objectivity with the advocacy of social control. He argued that

the objective viewpoint in sociology is interested in man as an object of investigation and a subject of social control . . . All preliminary analysis of society as it is must ultimately look in the direction of society as it should be, whether the analyst perceives this implication or not. (Italics mine.) 27

Bernard therefore insisted that it is necessary for sociologists to make "synthetic generalizations" as to the most normal or ideal
social adjustments. 28 Bernard continued these themes in a series of articles on social progress and social control published throughout the 1920's. 29

Ogburn participated in this trend toward objectivity especially by means of his quantitative research -- but also with the theoretical language that he used. Because of his preference for the noncommittal term "social change" rather than social "progress," historian Dorothy Ross has argued that Ogburn was "obviously trying to re-work the idea of historical progress into a chastened, scientific theory." 30 Ogburn thus serves as a prime example of the widespread effort to clothe progressivism and social reformism in the mantle of scientific objectivity.

Even more so than the neutral term "social change," the cultural lag hypothesis -- which is objective in appearance yet subjective in substance -- made a good vehicle for the reformist aspirations of sociologists. To define a problem as a "cultural lag" is to take it out of the moral and political sphere and to put it under the care of social science -- a trend which cannot help but enhance the authority of social scientists. To employ lag analysis is to appear to be concerned mainly with process and technique rather than with values -- and to critique society strictly from the standpoint of means rather than ends. And yet, by the very act of describing a situation as "lagging," the social scientist (whether he is aware of it or not) assumes the position of arbiter of ultimate social ends. A bid for cultural authority is thus always implicit in the sociologist's claim that
a lag has occurred. The goal of social "adjustment" also gives the impression that social problems are well within social scientists' ability to diagnose and cure. Based on the "lag" view of social problems, Malcolm Willey could be confident about the future of reform:

Regarded as the lag of one particular complex in relation to another, a social problem does not appear either as terrifying or insuperable as before. Further, understanding thus clearly the nature of a social problem, it is much easier to direct the attention of the reformer in such a way that his efforts will not be lost. 31

Robert Lynd's indictment of do-nothing social science in the late 1930's suggests another advantage of an emphasis on "lag" and social "management." Lynd challenged his fellow social scientists to involve themselves in practical issues: "A world floundering disastrously because of its inability to make its institutions work is asking the social sciences: 'What do you know? What do you propose?'" 32 At the same time, Lynd conceded, there are barriers to outright involvement in liberal reform by university professors. The faculty member is subordinate to businessmen trustees who make the "insistent demand that his thinking shall not be subversive." 33 In the face of such pressures, social science as management (embodied in cultural lag, a concept which Lynd himself employed) could provide a welcome refuge -- a middle path between reform and scholarship, advocacy and objectivity.

According to the critics of the lag hypothesis, however, objectivity was just what "lag" was lacking. Even one of its main
defenders felt obliged to admit that

the subjective nature of the cultural lag concept ... cannot be
escaped. And it is very interesting that, after we have kicked the
concept 'progress' out of the front door we should find it
returning in scientific disguise by a rear entrance. Thus it is
scarcely too much to say that the average example of culture lag
not merely presumes to say what progress is but presumes to tell
us how much we have had, how much we ought to have had and
when. 34

It should be noted that the author's complaint was against "the
average example of cultural lag." as found in the writings of
over-enthusiastic social pathologists. He did not reject the entire idea
of lag, but rather advocated its more careful use.

Paradoxically, this element of subjective evaluation, the very
thing that made the lag idea so vulnerable to criticism, was also its
greatest strength -- that is, what gave the hypothesis its continuing
appeal to many sociologists. Even as social scientists developed a
passion for disinterested, scientific objectivity, this urge was
tempered, and perhaps overwhelmed at times, by their desire for
influence and relevance with respect to social policy. In other words,
the lag hypothesis, along with related concepts such as "social
adjustment," cloaked a "will to power" among sociologists. Apparently,
many friends of the lag concept did not worry that one man's lag
might be another man's adjustment. Rather, they assumed the
existence of a significant degree of consensus on social values. They
accepted "cultural lag" conditionally, based on its careful application --
but, at the same time, were confident in their own ability to set an
appropriate social agenda for the American people.
In the chapters which remain, we will turn to a new set of questions. If Ogburn's lag thesis fit so well with the prevailing assumptions of American social thought, and was initially well received, then why did leading sociologists turn against it beginning in the late 1920's? On the other hand, if "cultural lag" was subjected to intensive criticism, why then did it persist into the 1950's as a plausible mode of social analysis? The second half of this essay, which addresses these issues, begins with a survey of Ogburn's theoretical writings subsequent to his first book.
CHAPTER 7
CONTINUITIES AND INCONSISTENCIES IN OGBURN'S
POST-1922 THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

From the Fall of 1929 to early 1933, America experienced the first years of the Great Depression and the waning days of the Hoover Administration. Ironically, this period also saw the labors of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends. The committee consisted of a group of prominent social scientists, including William Ogburn, appointed by President Hoover to conduct a comprehensive survey of social trends in America. This research was intended as groundwork for a national program of social reform so that, according to historian Barry Karl, "the issues of unemployment, education, old age, medicine, crime, the full panoply of both the new and the traditional reform concerns, could be dealt with in rational, scientifically organized form." 1 In order to avoid being overshadowed by the national political contest of 1932, the committee waited until January of the new year to issue their report. By that time, however, the man who had championed the cause of federally-mandated (albeit Rockefeller-financed) social reform was on his way out of office.

Of all the committee participants, Ogburn was probably keenest for a truly scientific social survey, and he was concerned lest the committee's work be compromised by political partisanship during the election year. Even so, as he remarked in a personal letter,

I doubt if we've ever had a man in the White House who ever labored more courageously or more intelligently... I should say roughly that Mr. Hoover did 100 times as much against a depression as any other President has done before. The people
were not voting against Mr. Hoover, they were voting against the business cycle. . . .

This statement conveys an idea of how Ogburn's social change theory colored his view of current events. Ogburn was not tremendously alarmed by the Depression and apparently was not a strong supporter of the New Deal. He looked rather to the long historical trend. The Depression was a temporary, and even predictable, delay in the march of technological progress. It was indeed unfortunate that a single politician, especially one so committed to social science, should be held responsible for an economic fluctuation which was far beyond the control of even the most powerful individual.

The Recent Social Trends study was only one, although probably the most widely influential, of numerous milestones in Ogburn's career after his 1922 text. This publishing record served to keep "cultural lag" before the eyes of social thinkers on a regular basis for nearly four decades. A similar Depression-era social survey was Social Aspects of Technology (1937), of which Ogburn was the Director of Research. Ogburn's second major book, Sociology (1940), co-authored by Meyer Nimkoff, restated the lag hypothesis with some minor qualifications. A new round of works focusing on technology and social change began with the post-war atomic crisis. Ogburn's influential article "Sociology and the Atom" (1946) was followed by Social Effects of Aviation (1946) and Technology and International Relations (with others, 1949). The seminal text Social Change was reprinted without revision in 1950, but included an additional chapter
reaffirming Ogburn's social evolution theory. Meyer Nimkoff again collaborated with Ogburn on Technology and the Changing Family (1955). Technology and Social Change (1957) featured Ogburn and Hornell Hart, among others. Two years before his death, Ogburn wrote an article on "Cultural Lag as Theory," an event which reflects Ogburn's tendency to return to old familiar ideas.

Like the basic continuity that Ogburn always found in history itself, the hallmark of Ogburn's intellectual output was its recurrent emphasis on several seminal themes -- most of which appeared originally in Social Change. Ogburn himself declared in 1950 that

on rereading the section on social evolution in Social Change it is thought that the essential factors that explain social evolution are there to be found. ... Since the first printing of this book, there have been additional researches which strengthen and confirm those there stated. 3

Ogburn's broadening empirical investigations were thus always set within the same basic theoretical framework, which included the themes of accumulative growth in technology and science, cultural interdependence, cultural maladjustment and the lag hypothesis, historical continuity, prediction of the future, and social control.

Although Ogburn made no fundamental theoretical changes, he did refine a few points. The most significant of these revisions was his shift from a focus on "material culture" to "technology" during the 1930's -- although, as we will see, Ogburn continued to confuse these concepts on occasion. This "refinement" was actually one of several inconsistencies in Ogburn's thought which were to remain unresolved. The other inconsistencies may be described as determinism vs.
individual autonomy in the explanation of social change, optimism vs. pessimism concerning the prospects for social adjustment, and cultural lag vs. "biological lag" in the portrayal of social maladjustment.

**Interdependence and Remote Causation**

We have seen that the "technological interpretation of history" was a like a thread woven through the whole of Ogburn's social theory. Ogburn's strong emphasis on technology was also bound up with two of his foundational assumptions: cultural interdependence and remote causation. "The reason why inventions have all these various [social] influences" observed Ogburn, "... is that the parts of culture are interconnected." 4 Ogburn's emphasis on cultural interdependence undergirded his sensitivity to remote causation. Remote causation appeared most prominently in Ogburn's "four-chain sequence, to wit, technology, industry, government, social philosophy." 5 As Ogburn noted,

> a very common pattern is for the technological change to effect, first, an economic organization which, second, causes a change in some social institution, such as the family or government, and which finally causes a change in the social philosophy of a people. 6

This sequence of explanation, as we have seen already, traced most social changes, ultimately, to innovations in technology. As Ogburn argued,

> the doctrine of states rights is being broken down much more completely and successfully by ... inventions than it was by the armies of Grant and Sherman. It is futile to blame President Roosevelt for the concentration of power. It would be more appropriate to fix the blame on Bell, the inventor of the
telephone. Henry Ford, developer of the automobile, protests vigorously against these trends in the federal government, yet he is doing more to build up the power of the federal government and to break the spirit of local government than is the president. 7

Another example of Ogburn's sensitivity to remote causation is found in his list of 150 social effects of the radio and telephone. In Recent Social Trends (1933), Ogburn and S. C. Gilfillan listed such varied effects as decreased crop damage due to weather reports, a greater homogeneity of personalities due to like stimuli, new government regulatory functions to prevent profanity in radio broadcasts, and increased interest in sports. 8

Whether he began his discussion with inventions and then derived the effects, or began by considering modern institutional changes and worked back to the technological causes, Ogburn always pointed out the long causal connection. One of his examples began with the invention of the contraceptive. This device was invented in France in the early 1800's but was not used in other countries until late in the century. "Thus at the time of the beginning of the First World War" Ogburn noted, "the birth rate in Germany was very much greater than that of France and may have been a factor in causing the war." 9 Ogburn was also fond of showing how the mere invention of the tin can had helped bring about woman's suffrage. On the other hand, he traced the shift in economic power from farms to cities back to the advent of railroads and the factory system. 10

While Ogburn's technological emphasis was overly simplistic due to its virtual exclusion of non-technological causative factors, it
nevertheless involved the presuppositions of cultural interdependence and remote causation. These presuppositions were of enduring value and are what made Ogburn's social analysis, in some instances, almost profound. They were also foundational to other prominent themes in Ogburn's writings: the lag hypothesis, historical continuity, and prediction of the future.

**Cultural Lag**

The concept of cultural lag was featured repeatedly throughout Ogburn's writings. But even when it was not mentioned explicitly, the lag idea was often implicit in Ogburn's analyses of general social change. In a characteristic discussion, Ogburn observed that the family was once the chief regulatory agency over production; but as technology moved production outside, it was more or less unregulated, until it was found that the state had to do what the family once did in regulating working conditions. . . . From this analysis it follows logically that there must have been a delay in the transfer of functions from family to state. 11

This delay "was quite seriously prolonged in the case of workingmen's compensation and no doubt in the case of caring for the old and in unemployment insurance, as well as in other services." 12 Such discussions of institutional history lend credence to the hypothesis of cultural lag.

Ogburn's institutional analyses were seldom merely academic, but were freighted with practical implications -- as suggested by Ogburn's distinction between "stationary" and "changing" societies. Ogburn admitted that these two kinds of society were mere abstract
types, created for the purpose of drawing a contrast. His immediate goal was to cast into high relief the "stationary" traits which have continued in the midst of "changing" social conditions. As a result of this situation, Ogburn argued, "modern society has not made a successful shift to a condition of change." 14

Curiously enough, Ogburn found some cultural traits from relatively modern times to be quite illustrative of "stationary society." In arguing that issues of morality are simpler in comparatively static social conditions, Ogburn declared that "the mid-Victorian rules of behavior were much more easily followed by the average run of human beings" because they were clear and specific, and one knew how to act in every situation. 15 Ogburn also noted that static social conditions require an emphasis on "morals, character, self-control, obedience, etc." 16 In both of these passages, Ogburn cited aspects of nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture as representative of a "stationary society." Ogburn's other illustrations of this type of society contained what one would rather expect: agrarian, pre-modern, or non-Western conditions. Yet, Victorian society made for an especially suggestive example because it contained the nexus of cultural lag: a high degree of both technological improvement and apparent cultural inertia. This blatantly ideological and partisan use of the "stationary society" concept suggests, in turn, the ideological character of the lag hypothesis itself, since Ogburn used the concepts of stationary and changing societies to buttress the notion of cultural lag.
Historical Continuity

Historical continuity, especially in the realm of technology, was frequently emphasized in Ogburn's writings. Ogburn declared, for example, that

history contrasts the Renaissance and the Dark Ages only with respect to art, learning and social organization, but these taken together compose only a small fraction of culture. It is not generally known that there were many important mechanical inventions during the Dark Ages. 17

Ogburn also claimed that

the picture of the inventional process is not one of a series of great inventions of revolutionary significance strung together across time. It is rather one of a multitude of small inventions occurring with great frequency. 18

Ogburn argued, in short, that "continuity and evolution are common, violence and revolution rare." 19

The theme of continuity -- and a resulting confidence about the future of social progress -- came to the fore even in Ogburn's reaction to the most devastating domestic crisis of early-twentieth-century America. In articles written during the 1930's, Ogburn remained true to his theory of social change, and thus interpreted the Great Depression as a mere setback. Ogburn's consistency on this issue can be highlighted with a brief before-after comparison. Just before the stock market crash, Ogburn affirmed that

one generalization does stand out sharply in our social and historical studies. It is that there is a continuity in cultural change; one event grows out of another. An invention is a co-ordination of existing elements. Discoveries are based on previous knowledge. Miracles do not occur, and revolutions are few. 20

After the Depression had deepened, in 1931, Ogburn found
that the trend of new inventions manifests

a somewhat undulating movement upward in the growth of
material culture. Nations rise and fall, and peoples carrying a
civilization shift their relative positions toward priority, but for
the world as a whole the total variety of inventions has more or
less steadily increased. 21

Ogburn also, in 1935, commented directly on the Depression:

After all the violent and exaggerated interpretations today of these
eventful years shall have been forgotten, the future historians of
the period will note. . . . that we have had an unusually long and
severe business depression, and not a near-collapse of
civilization. . . . 22"

In these Depression-era statements, Ogburn reaffirmed his
faith in progress -- a faith which was implicit in his concept of
historical continuity.

Prediction and Social Planning

Hardly an article appeared during the 1920's and 30's in which
Ogburn did not at least consider the prospects for making sociology a
predictive science. The quantitative measurement of past cultural
growth was the foundation for projecting future social effects.
Specifically, it was technological trends which gave the best cues for
social prediction. As Ogburn argued,

suppose for instance it was desired to predict what the
agricultural situation and rural life would be like twenty-five years
from now and to lay out accordingly some agricultural plans. In
making a forecast of coming changes, of how much value would be
a knowledge of psychology? 23

In addition to psychology, Ogburn considered aspects of the
social heritage, including the church, the family, and the state, as
possible indicators of future changes. All of these were (rather
summarily) weighed and found wanting in predictive value. Ogburn concluded that only technology exerts the consistent social impact which can provide a basis for prediction.

Ogburn was interested in social forecasting as a means to planning and control. In "The Dynamics and Control of Social Change" (1939), he argued that dealing with cultural lags, since it does not require prediction, was not really the most advanced form of social control. On one hand, this article contains Ogburn's characteristic claim that "one of the greatest needs for control of social change lies in lessening the delay of the adjustments to the new inventions." 24

But here, Ogburn also argued that

it may be questioned whether the efforts of social reformers can properly be called attempts to control change. Reformers are often merely running to catch the technological train. . . . Catching up lags is not exactly the leadership one associates with control . . . . Such control would mean, rather, anticipation and planning. . . . 25

Ogburn was apparently distancing himself from the ad hoc reform style of the Progressive era, and advocating a more far-sighted approach to social planning. In later articles, however, Ogburn glossed over this distinction between social control and catching up lags. During the 1950's, he continued to call for prediction of future inventions and their probable social effects. And yet, this planning was for the purpose of "speeding the removal of lags in the adjustment to an invention whose effects are forecast. . . ." 26 Thus, Ogburn's emphasis on solving cultural lags remained primary throughout his career, although the focus shifted to anticipating problems before they
actually arose.

We turn now to four tension-points in Ogburn's writings:
"material culture" vs. "technology" as the independent variable in social change, pessimism vs. optimism concerning the prospects for social adjustment, determinism vs. individual autonomy in explaining the causes of social change, and the confusion of cultural lag and "biological lag" in Ogburn's descriptions of social maladjustment.

From "Material Culture" to "Technology"

It was actually over a decade after the publication of Social Change that Ogburn developed a "technological" theory of social change. This theoretical refinement was one of Ogburn's few major responses to his critics. Even though they have been overlooked by most writers, there were significant differences between Ogburn's "material culture" of 1922, and his "technology" in the 1930's. We are indebted to sociologist Toby Huff for his perceptive analysis of this shift in Ogburn's theory. Huff argues that "technology" was not merely a "handy synonym for 'material culture'," as so many sociologists have concluded.... 27 Huff demonstrates, first of all, that Ogburn's definitions of "technology" and "material culture" are clearly incompatible; some functions usually regarded as part of technology are not part of Ogburn's material culture. In Social Change, Ogburn's "adaptive" (non-material) culture includes, among other things, "the technique of handling a tool," and "certain rules involved in handling technological appliances" -- factors normally included as part of
"technology." (Italics mine.) It is impossible, then, to equate Ogbum's "technology" with Ogbum's "material culture."

The second problem with the original version of Ogbum's theory was its view of science. Huff observes that "consistently throughout Social Change Ogbum located science among the nonmaterial, and presumably lagging cultural elements." And yet, as Huff notes, Ogbum contradicted himself by acknowledging that "science seems to be rather highly accumulative" --- a statement which implies a distinction between science and the rest of non-material culture.

Ogbum's illustrations of cultural accumulation, however, were less ambiguous. Huff observes that although Ogbum's law of compound interest (also referred to as the principle of 'exponential growth') was specifically applied by Ogbum only to 'material culture,' his studies of 'invention and discoveries' imply that the law applies also to discoveries in 'science.'

Ogbum tacitly acknowledged that science is cumulative, since his list of 148 inventions and discoveries draws as much from the history of science as from the history of mechanical invention. The same debt to science as well as mechanics emerges in Ogbum's list of patents issued in the U.S. during the 1840-1920 period. Huff concludes that whereas Ogbum's empirical data . . . implied that science was highly accumulative and approximated the exponential growth curve, his theory postulated an important distinction between the 'material' and the 'nonmaterial' and placed science in the lagging non-material culture. The theory therefore could not adequately explain the role of science in sociocultural change. The material-nonmaterial dichotomy was both too crude and too
imprecisely tuned to empirical reality to explain Ogburn's own recordings of social change. 32

During the 1930's, Ogburn resolved this tension by replacing the old material/non-material dichotomy with a new distinction between "technology" and "social institutions." The hallmark of Ogburn's new theory was the inclusion of science in the leading part of culture, such that "technology" (supposedly) included knowledge as well as tangible inventions. As Huff concludes, "the new formulation at last eliminated the sociologically irrelevant 'materiality' of cultural items." 33

Despite Huff's helpful analysis, it should be pointed out that Ogburn never really abandoned his concept of "material culture." Huff concedes this point, but only to a limited extent, by noting that Ogburn's material/non-material terminology did not disappear even after the technology-oriented writings began in the middle 1930's. 34 In his textbook Sociology (1940), co-authored by Meyer Nimkoff, Ogburn equated the two terms by claiming that "innovations may be in either the material or non-material culture. War, a social invention, can cause as great disorganization as technological changes." (Italics mine.) 35 Ogburn thus used "technology" and "material culture" interchangeably -- although one might assume (as Huff does) that the new "technology" definition was the guiding idea. This revised definition is evident in Ogburn's comment that "invention is a function of the materials and knowledge with which we make inventions..." (Italics mine.) 36

And yet, Ogburn sometimes defined "technology" explicitly in
terms of "material culture." As late as 1956, he claimed that technology "includes the objects of material culture" such as buildings, vehicles, processed foods, clothing, i.e., "the material products of technology, which is the implication of the word 'technology' in the title [i.e., "Technology as Environment"]." (Italics mine.) 37 These tangible objects were the same things that Ogburn had listed in his original definition of "material culture" in Social Change! This tendency muddled the waters of Ogburn's social theory -- and provides some justification for those writers who see no significant revisions (only a renaming) of his concept of material culture.

Determinism vs. Autonomy

In his post-1922 writings, Ogburn oscillated between an emphasis on cultural determinism and individual autonomy. He emphasized a clearly deterministic theme in "The Great Man vs. Social Forces." 38 Ogburn conceded that insufficient measurement techniques exist by which to separate out individual and social factors. Yet, he concluded that certain extended observations indicate that the production of great men and their influence are strongly conditioned and determined by the particular existing stage of historical development. The great man and his work appear therefore as only a step in a process, largely dependent upon other factors. 39

In a 1942 article, however, Ogburn elevated the role of individuals to a considerable extent:

Inventions are seen in the theory being set forth here as a [social]
force. How can so material an object as an invention be a force? ... When the phrase 'the force of invention' is used, or when 'technological forces' are implied, what is meant is that invention or technology serves as a new stimulus for groups of individuals to behave in different ways. ... Thus, railroads were a force in building cities. ... Human beings react to these iron rails and mobile engines as stimuli by building cities. It is in this sense, therefore, that inventions become a force in history. They stimulate human activity. 40

In this instance, Ogburn acknowledged that material objects do not produce social change directly (which, incidentally, was inconsistent with his object-oriented definition of technology). Rather, people produce social and institutional changes as they consciously respond to inventions. Ogburn thus tried to soften his determinism on occasion, yet this never overshadowed the emphasis on culture to the exclusion of individuals which appeared in most of his discussions of social change.

**Pessimism vs. Optimism**

Paradoxically, Ogburn's deterministic outlook led to both pessimism and optimism concerning the prospects for social progress. Optimism was built into Ogburn's emphasis on historical continuity and continuous technological progress, and was clearly a dominant theme in his writings. But Ogburn's determinism occasionally led him to predict that technological advance would bring continuous social maladjustments. In *Social Change*, Ogburn claimed that the increasing accumulation of material culture would make "problems of adjustment ever-recurring." 41 Ogburn later remarked that
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that
for the future, there is no particular reason to think that the technological inventions and scientific discoveries will slow up. Indeed, they are likely to come faster. However, we may, perhaps, be able to speed up the changes in other institutions slightly more quickly, by greater use of the communication inventions. But on the other hand, the process of keeping up with the pace set by technology may be slowed up because of the increasing heterogeneity of society and the possible greater number of institutional lags to be caught up. Therefore, no prospective integration of state and industry is expected to deliver us in the future from grave social disturbances. 42

On another occasion, Ogburn gave a vivid description of inexorable technological change and inevitable maladjustment:

Some governmental structures are . . . an . . . obstacle to change. Meanwhile, technology develops, is let loose on society, sweeping all before it. Time on the clock of technology cannot be turned back. We cannot return to the Stone Age, or to the horse and buggy, or to the plantation days of a rural economy. Technology rolls on like a huge tidal wave, while governmental structures stand like the Rock of Ages in a world of disorder -- an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. If governmental structures won't change and technology can't be stopped, what will happen? 43

Ogburn went on to acknowledge that governmental structures really do change and adjust -- but only "after delays long and painful enough. . . . But the tragedy lies in the delay." 44

In contrast to this pessimistic scenario, Ogburn offered a more balanced evaluation of cultural change:

The fact that culture is changing brings a multitude of problems that would not exist were we living in a stationary society. . . . But change also brings hope, the idea that mistakes of the past are being left behind. Change brings the hope that we may build a better world. Since everything is changing, may change not be controlled and directed, so that this veil of tears may become a happier place in which to live? 45

Because of his view of historic continuity, Ogburn could also express great optimism:

It appears . . . that there will be increasing technological
development. This makes, it would seem, the prospects of a destruction of civilization very remote indeed. (For an explanation of those who see a collapse of civilization, the psychiatrist, it is suspected, is needed rather than the economist or sociologist.) The curve of increasing inventions has been fairly steadily upward since the beginning it is thought, even through the fall of Rome, the decline of Greece and through the Dark Ages, with perhaps some undulation for the world as a whole, of course. The decline of art and philosophy, the disorganization of a particular government, or the change in codes of moral conduct, however upsetting to those who experience them, are not, of course, the destruction of civilization. 46

Ogburn acknowledged -- although he saw little warrant for -- the widespread concern during the interwar years about civilization and its possible decline. He countered this concern with a message of hope about the "fairly steadily upward" trend of technological civilization. He strongly implied, moreover, that technology is accumulative, unidirectional, and irreversible. In summary, while Ogburn could never escape a sense of the inevitability of maladjustment, his theme of recurring cultural lag was ultimately overshadowed by his progressive optimism and faith in reform.

**Cultural Lag vs. Biological Lag**

In Ogburn's post-1922 writings, the "theory of the cave man in the modern city" -- as a theory -- was hardly mentioned. Even though "biological lag" made a perfunctory appearance in the 1950 reprint of *Social Change*, it was not included in the appended chapter, "Social Evolution Reconsidered," which emphasized the cultural lag hypothesis. 47 And yet, one of the perplexing things about Ogburn's articles from the 1930's is their tendency to blend the idea of "biological lag" with a description of cultural lag. Sometimes even a
single paragraph shifts back and forth between the two concepts. In
discussing the maladjustment of modern society, for example, Ogburn
made this confusing statement:

Man, the animal, has problems ahead in adaptation to this new
environment of material culture. Each invention means a new
problem of adaptation for mankind. Women have not yet adapted
themselves to the tin can, although one of their adaptations in
part was woman [sic] suffrage. Families have a problem in
adapting themselves to contraceptives. We are not well adjusted
to factories. Our death rate is still greater in the new cities than
in the older rural cultures. So inventions mean social changes and
problems of adjustment. The lower animals have a simple natural
environment toward which to make an adaptation, as was also the
case of early man. But modern man has a huge cultural
environment to which he must adapt himself -- a huge culture
that is whirling through time, gaining size and velocity as it
goes. 48

The opening words of this passage, "man, the animal," indicate
a discussion about man's "original nature," thus suggesting the theory
of biological lag. Yet, the examples which follow pertain to cultural lag.
The final sentence, by way of contrast, declares that "modern man has
a huge cultural environment to which he must adapt himself" -- a
return to biological lag. What is missing from this passage is a
description of the material/non-material (or the
technology-institutions) dichotomy which is essential to the cultural
lag hypothesis. Ogburn focused, rather, on an undifferentiated
"cultural environment" which is not well adjusted to "man, the animal."

This ambiguous theoretical mixture was not an isolated
problem. It appeared also in Ogburn's analysis of how technology
affects the relative standing of church, family, village, government, and
industry. In discussing these shifts in institutional power -- and
implying that cultural lags were a result -- Ogburn noted that

it is quite possible that the weakening of the influence of religion has increased insanity. For the old-time religion with its variety of beliefs and deities was a wonderful pattern of culture for meeting the psychological needs of mankind, which are obviously great as man tries to make adjustments to so artificial a culture as modern civilization. 49

This passage does not fit with the article's emphasis on cultural lag, since Ogburn apparently refers here to the maladjustment between human nature and civilization -- i.e., biological lag. And the problem he describes, mental illness, is usually attributed to biological, not cultural, lag.

A third example of Ogburn's mixture of lag theories appeared in "The Dynamics and Control of Social Change" (1939), an article which, again, mainly emphasized cultural lag. Ogburn at first declared that "reformers, radicals, progressives, and liberals, then, are busily engaged in trying to speed up the lags in our social institutions to keep pace with an advancing science." 50 Toward the end of the article, however, he shifted to a consideration of maladjustment between human nature and culture. Ogburn re-emphasized his usual pessimism concerning the prospect of controlling biological lag when he claimed that

to expect to control the evolution of our whole social heritage is a grandiose dream. . . . What we want is really a more harmonious adjustment between man and culture. The superorganic impinges on organic man in many critical places. (Italics mine.) 51

This is clearly a reference to "biological lag," and it is followed by Ogburn's recommendation for increased recreation as a guard against mental disorders (as seen in his discussion of biological lag in
Social Change). Once again, the two theories are juxtaposed without any explanation of their relationship.

For now it will suffice to take note of the several inconsistencies in Ogburn's post-1922 theoretical writings -- and to suggest that the clarity gained in some areas of Ogburn's thought was offset by obscurity in other areas. For example, despite the important refinement seen in the new "technology" thesis of the 1930's (which, as we have seen, was itself not defined consistently), Ogburn was at times still equivocal as to the character of "maladjustment," since he wrote as if "biological lag" fits in neatly with the cultural lag hypothesis (which it does not). As sociologist Don Martindale has pointed out, it is surprising that no one "confronted" Ogburn concerning the ambiguous relationship between biological and cultural lag. 52 Moreover, none of the major critics of Ogburn's social thought faulted him for his mixing of the two lag theories -- or for the tension between confidence and pessimism in his discussions of "cultural lag." A partial explanation for these blind spots on the part of the critics will be offered in Chapter Ten.

The developments highlighted in the present chapter reveal increased reasons both for the acceptance of "cultural lag" (by those especially interested in social reforms commensurate with the progress they saw in technology), and for rejection (by those more interested in theoretical rigor). Moreover, the inconsistencies noted here were those which the critics overlooked, which suggests that, at least viewed from today's perspective, Ogburn was even less
perceptive than his detractors thought he was! The next two chapters will explore what the detractors and defenders said about Ogburn's cultural lag theory.
CHAPTER 8
CRITIQUES OF "CULTURAL LAG"

From the late 1920's to the mid-1940's, the cultural lag hypothesis was subjected to extensive examination and criticism -- although, as we should bear in mind, the concept's influence continued well into the postwar era. We should also note that, in several instances, this criticism was qualified by attempts to recast "cultural lag" in a more-rigorous theoretical framework -- a topic to be considered in the next chapter, which describes Ogburn's defenders. In the present discussion, we will explore the weaknesses that critics found in the cultural lag theory, with critics grouped according to the weakness which each of them emphasized. The three main areas of criticism were (1) the material/non-material classification of culture, (2) the inability to correlate the rates of material and non-material change, and -- most important of the three -- (3) the subjective and evaluative nature of "cultural lag." Finally, we will take note of Ogburn's responses to his critics.

The Material/Non-material Classification of Culture

Although many writers took issue with the material/non-material classification, the basic idea of cultural lag generally weathered this part of the critical storm. Indeed, this was the one aspect of the critiques leveled against "cultural lag" that Ogburn positively responded to, when he began to focus on "technology" rather than "material culture." As we will see, other
critiques were resisted by Ogburn and others friendly to the lag hypothesis. Sociologist Howard Becker offered perhaps the most concise critique of the material/non-material dichotomy in cultural analysis:

There seems no good reason why sociological theory should be able to make much use of a classification of culture based on museum utility. If a cultural trait can be put under glass, it's material, and everything else is non-material. This is one of those famous classifications that are true but useless. ¹

Becker's charge that the material/non-material classification of culture has only "museum utility" was elaborated by Harvard sociologist Robert K. Merton. According to Merton, Ogburn was short on theory and long on examples with respect to his definitions of material and non-material culture. Merton charged, moreover, that Ogburn's examples were sometimes inconsistent with his theory. Ogburn contradicted his own definition of "material culture" as material objects by claiming (albeit correctly) that

the cumulative nature of the process of material culture lies not in the life of the particular object but in the perpetuation of the knowledge of the method of making the object, which has been passed on from generation to generation. ²

Since Ogburn had in other passages placed "knowledge" within non-material culture, his classification of culture was inconsistent. But even if material and non-material culture could be more precisely and consistently defined, there would remain the question of what these categories reveal about social behavior. Like Howard Becker, Merton argued that the material/non-material dichotomy was impertinent to sociological analysis. ³ One difficulty stemmed from the residual
character of "non-material culture." How can one make
generalizations, Merton asked, about a category which lumps together
everything which is not "material culture?" He argued, moreover,
that Ogburn's dichotomy of culture is useful only for the recognition of
phenomena; it cannot describe uniform causes of sociological events.
Merton concluded that the material/non-material dichotomy can be
compared to the distinction between red and non-red objects. No one
denies the distinction, but its sociological relevance is doubtful. 4

Some critics of the material/non-material dichotomy were
actually attempting to put Ogburn's hypothesis on a more sound
footing. Sociologist L. L. Bernard argued that the concept of material
culture failed to account for the many mentalistic aspects of invention.
Like Franklin H. Giddings, Charles A. Ellwood and other sociologists,
Bernard was keenly aware of the "organic" prerequisites for invention:
man's prehensile hands, his large brain capacity, and his ability to use
language. More like Ogburn, Bernard also argued that the gradual
historic increase in the mentalistic component of inventions derived
from man's cultural evolution. While early inventors employed an
"empirical" method, based upon previous success or trial and error,
man gradually shifted to a "projective" or conceptual method of
invention. 5 No amount of trial and error with existing materials could
produce a printing press until someone took an imaginative leap to
"project" its possibility. Bernard's worry was that, in the realm of
"social inventions," the projective method had not enjoyed nearly the
success of the tried-and-true empirical approach. 6 Bernard thus
promoted a more mentalistic version of Ogburn's "material culture."

James W. Woodward of Temple University, like L. L. Bernard, also revised Ogburn's classification of culture in order to form "a restatement of the culture lag theory." Woodward replaced Ogburn's "material culture" with what he called "inductive culture," which includes tools and machines -- although it also includes scientific knowledge. According to Woodward, then, inductive culture "cuts across the division into material and non-material culture and infringes somewhat even on the territory of the so-called adaptive culture." Changes in this part of culture are "more readily received" than in the other parts, so that inductive culture is "uniquely a pace-setter among the three sections of the culture. . . ." Ogburn apparently took critiques like this seriously (although he seldom acknowledged them directly) since he shifted to his "technology" emphasis during the 1930's.

The Problem of Correlation

As one surveys the literature of response to Ogburn's theoretical work, a telling pattern emerges: the younger and (from today's vantage point) more well-known reviewers -- Robert K. Merton, Pitirim Sorokin, and C. Wright Mills -- were the most damaging to Ogburn. The difference between critics and admirers of the lag hypothesis was in part a generational matter. Older progressives such as Harry Elmer Barnes and Hornell Hart continued to promote and defend the lag idea long after the critical writings had
largely spent themselves out. This trend will be seen in more detail in the following chapters, but for now we can note that the tenacity of "cultural lag" owed at least something to the longevity of social thinkers who came of age during the Progressive era.

Of the more critical younger reviewers, Pitirim Sorokin launched probably the earliest and perhaps the most scathing attack on Ogburn. This came in a 1933 review of *Recent Social Trends*, the government report originally commissioned under President Hoover. While empirical research formed the bulk of the study, cultural lag supplied the theoretical framework employed by the various authors. Sorokin charged that the lag hypothesis was founded on a spurious correlation of changes in material and non-material culture. Sorokin argued that, while it is easy to talk of comparatively greater or lesser rates of change between different parts of culture, it is quite another thing to correlate those changes. Only such a correlation can give meaning to different rates of change:

> When one tries to decide, for example, in which field, law or religion, industry or the family, commerce or vital processes, arts or morals, the speed of change is greater, one stumbles over a set of insuperable difficulties. . . . there must be some 'unit of social change' devised so that we can measure the comparative velocity of the change in various social processes. Otherwise, all talk of different speeds is idle articulation. Have Professor Ogburn and the Committee offered such a unit of social change? They have not. 10

In addition to the hurdle of correlating the rates of change among the parts of a culture, the very idea of measurement within a particular part of culture is problematic. As Sorokin pointed out, most social changes are not so much quantitative as qualitative; . . .
most of the qualities are quite heterogeneous and irreducible to one another or to any common quantitative denominator. For these reasons we cannot 'measure' the comparative speeds of the various 'compartments' of culture. If within the same period of time, say one hundred years, steam-power is replaced by electricity ... Shakespeare by O'Neill; Beethoven by Gershwin; costumes of the sixteenth century by those of the twentieth; monogamic indissoluble family by complete liberty of sex unions; granted all this, can we say where the speed of change was greater and where it was lesser? Hardly. 11

In other words, to use two of Sorokin's examples, we cannot in the first place measure in terms of "speed" the qualitative change from Beethoven to Gershwin, much less compare this "rate" of change with the transition from Shakespeare to O'Neill!

The problem of correlating rates of cultural change (essentially the same point made by Sorokin) was later featured in Columbia University sociologist Kingsley Davis' textbook review of the lag hypothesis:

It is extremely difficult if not impossible to prove that in fact the rate of change in a particular part of culture is faster than the rate of other parts. How can it be proved, for instance, that the replacement of private by public ownership of railroads is a greater or lesser change than the passage of a prohibition amendment, or that the development of air transportation is a greater or lesser change than the spread of college education? 12

Davis added an original touch by calling attention to the metaphor of space and movement embodied in the term "lag." "The notion of 'lag' implies that in order to have an 'adjusted society' all parts of culture must eventually 'catch up' with the most rapidly changing parts..." declared Davis. 13 One would have to expect disastrous consequences, he argued, if one took too literally this picture of a "lag" between two objects constantly moving at different rates of speed:
If there were a permanent difference in the rate of change, no matter how small, it would eventually produce a gap that would be intolerably wide. This reasoning suggests that over a long period the rate of change in two different parts of culture cannot be very wide [i.e., if society is to continue functioning at all]. We must conclude, therefore, that comparisons of rates of change between different parts of social organization have at best a dubious validity. . . . (Italics mine.) 14

A brief but telling comment on the problem of correlation in lag theory appeared in 1947. The reviewer noted that

so far as the writer is aware, no empirical study has attempted to settle the question of the differential [i.e., the rate of change in different parts of culture]. It is simply stated as a fact. That it should be so widely accepted represents an interesting cultural bias in favor of the spread and growth of science and technology. 15

This statement indicates, on one hand, that sociologists were becoming more conscious -- and critical -- of the orientation toward technological progress which frequently informed their own conceptions of "social disorganization." On the other hand, it suggests that the earlier, penetrating criticisms made by Pitirim Sorokin and Kingsley Davis did not have an immediate impact, since the lag thesis was still "widely accepted" in 1947. Apparently, the "cultural bias" among social scientists was strong enough to help offset the specific weaknesses of "cultural lag."

Subjective Evaluation

The greatest number of criticisms of the lag hypothesis concerned its unscientific, subjective presuppositions. This was a weakness that Ogburn's lag thesis shared with other forms of social pathology. As Penn State's Willard Waller argued,
the term social problem indicates not merely an observed phenomena but the state of mind of the observer as well. ... Evaluative elements are present in a concept by implication, as in the case of the cultural lag concept. 16

Waller thus concluded that the hypothesis was damaged by its pretensions to scientific objectivity. According to another sociologist, to say that social disorganization is the result of cultural lag is simply to give another name to social disorganization. ... We are still left with the problem of accounting for the process of cultural lag itself. 17

A more widespread criticism concerned the dependence of the lag hypothesis upon prior judgements which must be rendered by any investigator seeking to translate "cultural lag" from theory to a concrete situation. For example, a social scientist must locate the beginning of any period of cultural lag. As James Woodward pointed out,

if we take any specific instance of culture lag, we see how difficult it is . . . really to fix the initial point at which lag begins. Let us take the illustration of workmen's compensation laws. . . . When does the lag in this regard begin in America? Does it begin at that point when industry no longer furnishes the workmen adequate recourse in the instance of injury? If so, it begins with the occurrence of factories themselves, at the Industrial Revolution and begins before the achievement of the concept of workmen's compensation. . . . 18

Another possible beginning for the lag period might be when the idea of compensation was first conceived, yet not adopted. "Or," Woodward asked, "does lag begin, not with the first inception of the concept of compensation, but rather with the first putting into effect of compensation laws by Bismarck in Germany; so that United States lags behind a proved possibility of better adjustment?" 19 These questions illustrate how non-empirical definitions and criteria must be
supplied by the social scientist.

An even more crucial prior judgement concerns the concepts of *adjustment* and *maladjustment* -- whose definitions should be used? There are two possible paths to adjustment: speed up changes in social institutions, or retard change in the material culture. As one critic observed, "Ogburn gives almost exclusive attention to the former as the desirable course." 20 Because Ogburn's "adjustment" was nearly always oriented toward the standard of technology, critics charged Ogburn with holding what may be called a "normative technology" presupposition. How can one assert, they asked, that a social institution is "lagging behind" a technological advance (and ought to "catch up") unless the current level of technology is assumed to be a normative standard in the first place? The critique of normative technology received perhaps its most widely-read expression in Lewis Mumford's *Technics and Civilization* (1934). Mumford observed that the lag thesis

> regards the machine as an independent structure, and it holds the direction and rate of change attained by the machine as the norm, to which all the other aspects of human life must conform. In truth, interactions between organisms and their environments take place in both directions, and it is just as correct to regard the machinery of warfare as retarded in relation to the morality of Confucius as it is to take the opposite position. 21

Mumford therefore judged the lag thesis to be "an essentially superficial interpretation. . . ." 22

Pitirim Sorokin was one of those who observed that Ogburn's lag thesis simply assumes that technological change is the normative standard for all types of social change:
Does it [Ogburn’s theory] not hold that those changes which are earliest in time and speediest in velocity are the best and represent the supreme value to which all other values should adjust themselves? If therefore, the economic organization which, according to the theory, changes earliest and most rapidly begins (for whatever reasons) to disintegrate, then religion, art, morals, science, the family, the government, and other social values and organizations, it seems, should disintegrate also in the process of 'adjustment' to, and 'synchronization' with, these economic conditions. The logical answer to the theory is 'yes'; the common sense and really scientific answer is 'no.'

Sorokin argued that, to use the term "adjustment" in an uncritical way, and to arbitrarily assume one part of culture to be normative, was to invite both theoretical and practical disaster.

Even more to the point, Indiana University's Edwin H. Sutherland charged that "cultural lag" involves a priori value judgements, however disguised:

Ogburn, in his theory of cultural lag, implies a definition of social disorganization which apparently eliminates the ethical evaluations by the participants, namely, social disorganization is the inconsistency in a culture which occurs when the material or technical elements change more quickly than the adaptive elements. This definition, however, does not succeed in eliminating the evaluative features, since the conditions prior to the change in the technological elements is assumed to be organization [i.e., a state of adjustment] and the criteria for appraising it as organization are stated.

In other words, "adjustment" is defined by the sociologist who must draw upon his own resources of opinion. Sutherland’s statement suggests, moreover, that the lag theory's concept of adjustment has conservative implications. Social critique cannot transcend the existing status of technological development. That is, it cannot posit an ultimate telos such as a communist society or an ideal of social justice. Like Progressive-era thought in general, the lag hypothesis
suggested an effort to fine-tune or "adjust," but not radically change, America's socio-economic system. Sutherland's criticism notwithstanding, this tendency on the part of Ogburn's idea probably added to its appeal among American social thinkers.

In 1935, Minnesota sociologist Wilson D. Wallis offered yet another variation on the normative technology theme. Wallis pointed out that rapid technological advance is already a foregone conclusion by the time an investigator asks whether some other social elements are lagging behind:

The [cultural lag] concept implies the selection of a factor, or variable, which is increasing at a rapid rate. Almost any concomitant factor, or variable, will then be found to lag. The classical instance is the lag of social adjustment upon technological advance. Social lag follows, it seems, because, and in some cases only because, a country or a period of history is selected in which there is rapid technological advance. When such a selection is made, lag is inevitable. 25

This selective process, it may be added, precludes stopping to ask the difficult question of whether certain social values helped produce that technological advance.

We must return once again to Pitirim Sorokin to see a deeper problem with the "normative technology" assumption. Even granting that non-material culture ought to be adjusted to material culture, there are still a vast range of possible "adjustments" to material conditions. Ogburn's hypothesis gives no specific guidance as to which forms of non-material culture are really the best suited for each material change. As Sorokin observed,

to see all the emptiness of the theory discussed it is enough to ask one's self, for instance, what type of family structure, what type of
religion, is best adjusted to the present industrio-economic set-up? Does the patriarchal or matriarchal family, the childless or ten-child family, low or high divorce rate, provide the best adjustment to contemporary economic conditions? What kind of religion... Religion a la communist militant materialism? Or that of Elmer Gantry?... It is enough to put such questions in order to make it clear that the theory discussed does not and cannot provide an adequate answer. 26

One of the more thoroughly disapproving critiques of cultural lag came not from a rival institution such as Columbia University, but from one of Ogburn's own colleagues at the University of Chicago. Sociologist Gerhard Meyer reviewed Technological Trends and National Policy (1937) which, like Recent Social Trends, was chaired by Ogburn. Meyer, like other critics, attacked this study's suggestion that invention is an independent variable in social change -- yet he focused especially on the implications for social policy:

Though it is admitted that inventions themselves are socially conditioned, changes in technology are mainly conceived as a rather independent datum for the formulation of government policies or 'planning'. 27

In Ogburn's introductory article, Meyer observed,

problems of policy, of political decision, of a conflict of values, are here mainly considered as factors making for lags. Ogburn's ideal seems to be a state where the technological trends are first ascertained, and then 'national policy' has only to determine the best means by which all other phases of social life can be adjusted to these trends. 28

Meyer concluded that "there is no sign that the use of this concept was of aid in stating and solving any important concrete problems of disturbance and planning" -- strong words coming from the department of sociology at the University of Chicago! 29

A deeper level of analysis of the lag hypothesis was attained in C. Wright Mills' "The Professional Ideology of Social Pathologists"
(1943). Mills summarized and superseded all of the previous critiques of subjective evaluation in cultural lag theory. He also touched on many of the themes, noted in Chapter Six, concerning the social scientists' desire to measure and manage social progress. Inspired by Karl Mannheim's concept of ideology and utopia, Mills argued that "cultural lag"

is tacitly oriented in a 'utopian' and progressive manner toward changing some areas of the culture or certain institutions so as to 'integrate' them with the state of progressive technology.  

Mills concluded that the lag thesis actually purports to reveal what changes are 'called for,' what changes 'ought' to have come about and didn't," and to show "what progress is . . . how much we have had, ought to have had, didn't have, and when and where we didn't have it.  

This evaluative function of the lag hypothesis is implicit in the term "called for" -- as when Étienne claims that certain changes in material culture "call for" or "occasion" corresponding changes in non-material culture -- what Mills described as a "pseudo-objective phrase."  

The most important and original part of Mills' discussion is its focus on the social context of the lag thesis. The key to understanding the lag idea, argued Mills, is to see how it draws upon the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century belief in progress. Mills contended that it is not enough to recognize that the stating of problems in terms of cultural lag involves evaluations, however disguised. One must . . . explain why just this form of evaluation has been so readily accepted and widely used by pathologists.  

Mills argued that the "lag" approach to social pathology derived
from the Enlightenment emphasis on advancing scientific knowledge. "The model in which institutions lag behind technology and science," declared Mills, "involves a positive evaluation of natural science and orderly progressive change." 34 This sanguine view of technological progress was disseminated in American education through the Scottish moral philosophy and became entrenched socially because academic men of the post-Civil War generation increasingly came from the expanding middle class. "Notions of progress" Mills argued, "are congenial to those who are rising in the scale of position and income." 35 With this brief historical sketch, Mills anticipated more recent interpretations of the professional ideology of progressive science.

Most important of all, Mills linked the "historicist" method of social analysis to the lag concept. As he noted, one aspect of the "liberal continuation of the Enlightenment" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was "its concept of time as progress." 36 Mills pointed out that
even though all the situations called 'lags' exist in the present, their functional realities are referred back, away from the present. Evaluations are thus translated into a time sequence; cultural lag is an assertion of unequal 'progress'. (Italics mine.) 37

With these comments, Mills suggested that the lag theory converts current value conflicts into time conflicts. Lag analysis, in other words, is a method of debunking which assigns certain contemporary practices to an earlier time -- i.e., a "temporalization of values." Mills' analysis of the progressive ideology undergirding the lag
hypothesis, although it does not explicitly charge sociologists with inflated ambitions toward social engineering, goes a long way toward explaining why "cultural lag" was (as Mills attested) "readily accepted and widely used by pathologists." Against this backdrop of criticism, the next chapter will demonstrate the rather surprising degree, and longevity, of approval for the cultural lag hypothesis. First, however, we will briefly take note of Ogburn's responses to his critics.

Ogburn and the Critics

In the previous chapter, we saw Ogburn's shift from an emphasis on "material culture" to "technology" -- most likely due to promptings from Robert Merton and Howard Becker. This shift may be regarded as an example of Ogburn's interaction with his critics. At only one point, however, did Ogburn directly defend the lag hypothesis against its detractors. This came in the textbook Sociology (1940), in which Ogburn argued that a degree of subjectivity in lag analysis was necessary and justifiable. Concerning the problem of correlation, Ogburn admitted that

there is no known co-efficient of correlation that measures the degree of correlation in the different parts [of culture]. Each reader will form his own opinion as his knowledge about culture increases. 39

With no more elaboration than this, Ogburn implied that mature insight would qualify the student to identify lags. Ogburn also emphasized that, in most cases in which lag analysis was applied, one could assume (or discover) a value consensus which would justify its
use. He was aware, for example, that

the word 'lag' implies that the proper course of action is to catch up the lag in the variable that . . . is changing more slowly, so that it will be in better adjustment with the variable that has changed. 40

Ogburn reasoned that this evaluative standpoint entailed no betrayal of the scientific approach. In the case of bringing greater safety to factories, Ogburn argued,

there is not much difficulty in demonstrating to the majority of reasonable men that the final adjustment was better than the preceding maladjustment since most observers would consider being crippled or getting killed, and leaving wives and little children in need of support, as not a good adjustment. 41

Ogburn also argued that catching up the non-material culture was the only way to bring about "adjustment," since we cannot "bring back the days of small hand tools when accidents were fewer. The change has already taken place in the first variable, so adjustments must be made in the second variable to the new conditions." 42

This was the extent of Ogburn's engagement with his critics. On the one other occasion in which he acknowledged criticism, he left the issue hanging, and resorted to making a mere technical distinction. In "Social Evolution Reconsidered" (1950), Ogburn reflected on his original text, Social Change. He claimed that

there has been little criticism of these theories of social evolution in the years since their first publication. The only part of the theory that has been criticized is the concept of cultural lag -- criticisms based, I think, upon distortions and misunderstandings. However, the concept of cultural lag is not a fundamental part of the theory of social evolution. 43

Unfortunately, Ogburn did not specify how the lag theory had been distorted and misunderstood. In reference to Ogburn's above
statement, one reviewer expressed frustration that

Professor Ogburn does not choose to take issue with the many critics of certain aspects of his theories. . . . This reviewer would have liked very much for Professor Ogburn to have clarified this answer to those critics of his version of 'culture lag' theory. 44

No real clarification, however, was forthcoming from Ogburn during his remaining years.
Surprisingly enough, Ogburn's lag hypothesis flourished at the very time that the criticism was most intense. Not only that, it continued to be employed long after the original critics had moved on to more constructive topics. In this chapter, we will survey the literature which acclaimed and popularized the concept of "cultural lag." We will also examine the "friendly critics" who tried to defend the concept against the charge of subjectivity. As will be apparent, the critics had little immediate effect on the popularity and plausibility of Ogburn's lag thesis.

Assessments of the Status of the Lag Hypothesis

Between 1922 and 1960, a number of writers recorded their impressions of the status of Ogburn's lag hypothesis in American sociological theory. These assessments are our first clue to the positive impact of "cultural lag." In his book Social Change and Social Problems (1934), Wharton School sociologist James H. S. Bossard remarked that "it is today an accepted sociological idea that a fundamental factor in many of our challenging social problems is the failure of our adaptive culture to keep pace with our rapidly-changing, problem-creating material culture." 1 Many of the examples of social problems in Bossard's volume are intentionally framed so as to illustrate the effects of cultural lag. Similarly, the University of Wisconsin's Kimball Young noted that "it is now generally accepted
that many of our contemporary problems of society result from this lag in one part of our culture in the face of changes in another." 2 Another reviewer of the lag concept reported in the mid-1930's that sociologists were so eager in accepting the lag hypothesis, "and so convincing did the concept appear that no compiler of an introductory textbook on sociology in recent years dared omit it from his index . . . ." 3

Even the more critical reviewers observed the widespread adoption of the lag idea in the sociological literature. Wilson Wallis noted that the idea of lag had been commonplace prior to Ogburn's formulation, but argued that Ogburn's work had popularized the idea, and predicted that the publication of Recent Social Trends (1933) would promote it even more. 4 In 1938, sociologist John H. Mueller of Indiana University remarked that "the 'cultural lag' hypothesis has enjoyed a popularity experienced by few other concepts," and compared its influence with that of William Graham Sumner's "folkways" and "mores." 5 Mueller noted that, although there were a number of criticisms of the lag theory, most of them "do not however argue the abandonment of this valuable concept, but they are due primarily to its loose employment." 6 Another reviewer in the late 1930's testified that "cultural lag" had "come to occupy a prominent place in the sociological vocabulary." 7 And in 1944, "lag, cultural" was for the first time included in the Dictionary of Sociology. 8

In The Proper Study of Mankind . . . (1948), social critic Stuart Chase showed great enthusiasm for "cultural lag" -- a stance which
should be kept in mind when considering his judgement that the theory was "a vital part of the culture concept, and one of the most useful and important principles in all social science." Historians of sociology Robert and Gisela Hinkle, in the mid-1950's, gave a more sober assessment: "Despite numerous criticisms this theory has remained an accepted, if not dominant, interpretation of social and cultural change in American sociology." The Hinkle's view was obliquely confirmed in sociologist Howard Becker's entreaty (made in 1950) for a more rigorous empirical basis for sociological generalizations. As an example of what to avoid, Becker cited the uncritical use of Ogburn's theory -- at the same time suggesting that "lag" was still a powerful influence on the sociological imagination:

Often preoccupation with orthodoxy of method leads to the neglect of the search for crucial checks. Many of us, for example, continue to follow the alliterative lit of Ogburn's 'cultural lag' as an all-sufficient explanation of changes in American divorce rates, blithely ignoring the fact that such changes were proceeding in reverse direction in pre-World War II Japan under conditions of even greater 'discrepancy' between nonmaterial and material culture. (Italics mine.)

In 1958, intellectual historian Stow Persons noted the declining, though not yet eclipsed, status of Ogburn's hypothesis:

"Although cultural lag still survives in contemporary thinking about social change, especially among students interested in practical problems of social disorganization and control, it has been subjected to critical scrutiny and is used more judiciously than in Ogburn's day. With the growing demand among sociologists for more objective methods, the theory has passed from the center of attention."
These ten assessments of the impact of "cultural lag," all made by Ogburn's contemporaries, suggest that a significant degree of acceptance of the concept was forthcoming from the 1920's until around the mid-1950's. The authors of these comments include both defenders and critics of the concept, as well as officially neutral observers such as Stow Persons and the Hinkles. Even more telling than these comments, however, are the more subjective expressions of acceptance, and the direct applications, of the lag hypothesis.

Acceptance of "Cultural Lag"

Anthropologist Melville Herskovits and sociologist Malcolm Willey co-authored one the earliest statements in favor of "cultural lag."

As they discussed the new anthropological culture concept, the authors noted that cultural changes are not uniform. There is the element which Ogburn calls 'lag.' Thus we see that in all societies economic changes are accepted quite readily. The South Sea Islander will quickly exchange his shell knife for the white man's steel blade, but he cannot be as easily induced to change his religion. 13

Early acceptance of the lag idea also came from sociologist Floyd Allport. Although Allport rejected Ogburn's cultural determinism, he nevertheless concluded that "maladjustments between the various parts of culture are brilliantly and convincingly treated under the caption of 'cultural lag'." 14 F. Stuart Chapin's Cultural Change (1928) was, in many ways, an elaboration of themes and methods found in Ogburn's Social Change. Chapin affirmed that the "failure of the non-material culture of our day to change as rapidly
as material culture changes, creates cultural lags and results in discord and dissatisfaction." 15

A general receptivity to the lag concept appeared in the numerous textbook descriptions of modern "social problems" during the 1920's and 30's. Many of these discussions display a striking faith in the ability of "cultural lag" to explain the social maladjustments with which liberal reformers and social thinkers were concerned. Malcolm Willey employed Ogburn's hypothesis to account for the subordination of women, the continuing appeal of orthodox religion, racial tension, and the conflict between capital and labor. Willey emphasized the explanatory power of the lag hypothesis when he claimed that "the woman problem is explicable in terms of cultural lag." 16 Like Ogburn, Willey described the nineteenth-century producer family, under which conditions "it is readily understood how the mores centered in the concept that the woman's place is in the home. Under such a scheme of life, it was." 17 With the rise of industry and cities, Willey observed, women became
torn between the new desire to go out into the world, and the old mores which tend to pull them back into the monotonous life of the home. Here is clearly a problem, growing out of the different rates of growth of two associated complexes. One set of traits lags behind the development of the other. 18

Carl A. Dawson and Warner E. Getty's *Introduction to Sociology* (1929) also contains a typical, and typically extensive, list of social problems explainable by the lag thesis:

One of the parts of our culture most resistant to social change seems to be religious creeds. Others include the patriarchal pattern of family organization, certain legal forms and legalistic
decisions, bureaucracy in political systems, cant and routine in education, and stereotyped methods in industry, business, and philanthropy. These and many other illustrations of the failure of changes in culture in one respect to keep pace with cultural changes in other respects, show how maladjusted to each other the different parts of culture have become. This problem of adjustment is occasioned by what Professor Ogburn has called 'cultural lag.' 19

Dawson and Getty's discussion of applications of the lag hypothesis concludes with the rather ominous suggestion that "the student is left to work out an analysis of similar processes in the other areas of social adjustment." 20

Textbooks published during the Great Depression often added concerns of that era the earlier examples of "cultural lag." The University of Cincinnati's Earle Eubank declared in 1932 that cultural lag was a "useful concept," the reality of which could be seen in "our nation-wide failure to cope with unemployment while scientific advance has been made easy in every line of technological and material organization..." 21 Similar approvals and uses of cultural lag can be found in textbooks by sociologists Floyd House, Kimball Young, and L. L. Bernard. 22

**Original Applications of the Lag Hypothesis**

Ogburn's lag idea inspired a kaleidoscopic array of original applications in the social sciences -- some rather predictable, and others quite imaginative. Taken together, they attest to the appeal of "lag" analysis to various intellectuals, especially during the 1930's.

Marxian social critic and longtime Ogburn associate Bernhard Stern produced perhaps the earliest elaboration of the lag idea.
Stern's writings often display a concern with the continual thwarting of science and technology throughout history. This theme pervades *Social Factors in Medical Progress* (1927), in which Stern described episodes of resistance to medical innovation. Stern drew upon Ogburn's discussion of "cultural inertia and conservatism" to show why many doctors fought against Edward Jenner's invention of the smallpox vaccination in 1798. Stern argued that there was a lag-time between the appearance of a medical innovation and its diffusion into general use. This argument constituted an extension of Ogburn's essential lag idea, since Ogburn always treated the diffusion of a material trait as given, and focused on lags in the adaptive culture. Writers such as Stern, who were apparently inspired by Ogburn, thus extended the meaning and significance of "lag." Moreover, a book like this, on the history of medicine, spread Ogburn's ideas beyond the circle of academic sociology.

When sociologist Howard Becker of the University of Chicago published "Sargasso Iceberg: A Study of Cultural Lag and Institutional Disintegration" (1928), he was apparently making an original application of Ogburn's lag hypothesis. He was also apparently confident that his readers would understand, without elaboration, at least the second part of the intriguing title to his article. Becker's subject was the effects of industrialization and disestablishment on the Lutheran Church in twentieth-century Germany. The first part of Becker's title suggests the unlikely situation in which an iceberg from the Arctic seas drifts south and becomes caught in the seaweed of the
Sargasso pool in the tropical Atlantic. The resulting entanglement and melting represents the real-life inertia and disintegration of the German Lutheran Church. Becker described how urban factories, improved transportation, and the loss of obligatory support for clergy was weakening the attachment of German countryfolk to their parishes. The church was unable to adjust to these new conditions due to its conservatism, and due to the merely formal authority wielded by local pastors. Curiously, this analysis came from a sociologist who, at the time he wrote, could (or may) have consulted with Ogburn first hand on the campus of the University of Chicago. It is significant, then, that Becker did not mention Ogburn in his text. Becker went a step further by not explaining, or even naming, the lag concept. Indeed, apart from the article's title, one would hardly guess that it is an application of the lag hypothesis -- one explanation of which may be that sociologists were well familiar with "cultural lag" by the late 1920's. Perhaps Becker's discussion also represents the desire, by a younger investigator, for increasingly sophisticated analyses of social disorganization -- only placed under the then-popular rubric of "cultural lag."

As a number of historians have suggested, probably the best-known application of the lag concept was Robert and Helen Lynd's sociological classic, *Middletown* (1929). Although it did not mention Ogburn or "lag," this best-selling book must have prepared a broad readership to accept the lag theory when it became widely-known in the wake of *Recent Social Trends* (1933). In the
Conclusion to their study, the Lynds observed that

in case after case the preceding pages have revealed Middletown as learning new ways of behaving towards material things more rapidly than new habits addressed to persons and non-material institutions. New tools and inventions have been the most prolific breeders of change.  

Thus, Middletown includes the familiar material/non-material dichotomy, and the notion of the slowness of "tradition and sentiment" to adapt to new inventions. Ten years after Middletown, in his book Knowledge for What? (1939), Robert Lynd directly cited Ogburn's theory as he tried to account for the "large measure of contradiction" in the social order. Such uses of the lag idea by a major sociologist must have helped to weave "lag" thinking into the consciousness of many students of American society.

Lesser lights also disseminated the lag idea. According to popular author and lecturer Raymond Fosdick,

we face the extraordinary contrast between our willingness to make any change whatever in our physical environment that convenience or well-being may prescribe, and our obstinate determination to leave unaltered as far as we can our relations both to the world and to each other.  

He concluded that, "if the advance in the last three generations had been more symmetrical, the quandary in which mankind is now placed would not be so marked." Like the Lynds in Middletown, Fosdick did not mention the theory of "lag" itself. Yet, such statements in the late 1920's prepared the reading public to recognize and accept Ogburn's hypothesis when it became more generally known in the 1930's.

The popularity of "cultural lag" during that decade is suggested
by the appearance of a number of new lag-related analytic devices. Sociologist Earle Eubank's concept of "regional lag" described, for example, the economic and cultural contrasts between Appalachia and the rest of the country. 30 A similar concept was James H. S. Bossard's "territorial lag," which denoted the uneven spread of a particular cultural innovation across a large area such as the United States. Regional or territorial lag was manifested in urban-rural values conflicts -- a common theme in interwar social thought. 31

Interest in cultural lag continued into the 1940's, although it began to drift toward the margin of academic attention. "Cultural Lag and the General Property Tax" (1941) is a rather routine application of the lag idea, and is of interest mainly for how clearly it expresses the middle-of-the-road political progressivism more typical of the first decade of the century. University of Indiana sociologist Mark C. Mills argued that "perhaps in no field . . . is cultural lag more in evidence than in that of taxation." 32 Like other liberal thinkers, Mills cited an eclectic mixture of causes, both calculated and inadvertent, for the taxation maladjustment he saw: "The tax system becomes embedded in law and in customary modes of thought and adjustment, so that to economic class interest there is added the positive resistance of ingrained habits and social inertia." 33 The author thus mixed economic interest together with psychological phobia and institutional fixity -- a list of causes which criticized existing ways of doing things, yet avoided too much of a radical or socialistic bent. Such lists of diverse "causes" underlying lags, as was the case in Ogburn's first book,
tended to reduce "cultural lag" to a purely descriptive category. Moreover, this causal ambiguity created an impression not so much of intentional *exploitation*, as of an overall, haphazard *maladjustment* -- something remediable by more efficient management rather than structural reform. "Cultural lag" was thus prone to circular reasoning; it was identified as both the cause and the result of "social disorganization." This bland causal tautology appeared at its worst in one sociologist's claim that

> the underlying cause of social disorder may be conveniently stated in the term disequilibrium, which, in turn, is due to the uneven advance in the ranks of progress in its inevitable sweep over human destiny as shown by Lester F. Ward, and further defined in the form of 'culture lag' by William F. Ogburn. 34

An unusual application of the lag idea appeared in Waldemar Kaempffert's "War and Technology" (1941). According to Kaempffert, military technology usually lags behind general science: "What Ogburn calls 'cultural lag' is found in armies as well as in science at large." 35 Poison gas, for example, *could* have been used in battle at any time after the French Revolution, yet it remained until the twentieth century "for Fritz Haber to suggest that chlorine be wafted at Ypres and Neuve Chapelle." 36 One of the reasons for this lag is that military technology, like industrial technology, is dependent upon hiring the skills of "outside," in this case civilian, inventors and scientists. Indeed, Fritz Haber, who suggested the military use of gas, was an industrial chemist. Gatling, inventor of the machine gun, was a physician.

> Probably the most extensive and detailed application of
"cultural lag" was made by a historian, Harry Elmer Barnes. Barnes was a major popularizer of the concept, who became increasingly wholesale in his use of lag analysis near the end of his career. 37 Barnes' massive volume, *Social Institutions in an Era of World Upheaval* (1942) was built entirely around the lag idea. Although written in the midst of the Second World War, Barnes' book provides colorful reminders of an earlier Progressive faith. Barnes used the lag concept to expose antiquated practices within the gamut of modern American social institutions, including government, law, war, marriage and family, economy, property, religion and morals, education, mass communication, leisure, and the arts. In effect, he reduced the problem of evil to the problem of lag: "Cultural lag is more responsible than all other causes combined in producing war, political corruption, poverty, misery, crime, and other major evils." 38 Barnes also complained bitterly that "the man who expresses great contempt for the transportation ideals of the horse-and-buggy era usually defends with gusto and conviction political and economic ideas which antedate the stagecoach." 39 Indeed, Barnes was ready to argue that "most of our institutional life and social thinking dates from the eighteenth century or earlier." 40 This fervent call for a casting off of our outmoded ideals and customs represented a high water mark of credence given to the lag hypothesis.

It was perhaps inevitable that some thinkers would blend the lag idea with psychological concerns. Sociologist Floyd Allport is probably unique (and surely correct) in arguing that Ogburn himself
actually founded his lag hypothesis on psychological factors:

It is true that laws of cultural growth and change have been worked out. These are well summarized by Professor Ogburn under such topics as curve of cumulative growth, diversification, diffusion, independent discovery, cultural inertia, survivals, and cultural lag. It is true that these concepts are stated wholly in terms of culture itself. It is my contention, however, that they are fundamentally descriptive rather than explanatory. The dynamics which they involve cannot be truly understood without recourse to the psychology of the individual. Thus Professor Ogburn freely employs psychological factors in explaining the mechanics of cultural inertia and cultural lag. (Italics mine.) 41

These "psychological factors" refer, apparently, to Ogburn's discussion of factors such as "habit," "forgetting the unpleasant," and "psychological traits of conservatism." 42 Allport implied that, in order to explain the occurrence of the lag phenomenon itself, Ogburn was obliged to violate his own rule of screening out psychological factors. Both Ogburn and most of his critics must have been unaware of this inconsistency. One reason for this situation is that, in Social Change, the discussion of "cultural inertia," which contains psychological factors, is completely separate from the section on "cultural lag." And yet, since Ogburn himself indicated that inertia was one of the main reasons for lag, he actually undercut the explanatory power of his lag hypothesis! 43

Psychological interpretations of the lag concept increased during the 1930's, along with the popularity of the "culture and personality" school -- as seen in best-selling books such as Ruth Benedict's Patterns of Culture (1934), and Karen Horney's The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (1937). Hadley Cantril of Harvard University attempted to buttress the lag theory by positing "A
Psychological Reason for the Lag of 'Non-Material' Culture Traits" (1935). According to Cantril, Ogburn's thesis suffered from its vague explanation of inertia or "obstacles to change" in non-material culture. 44 Cantril suggested that a better explanation lies in the fact that "new material traits ... will be rapidly accepted if they are consistent with existing attitudes ..." 45 For example, the palace at Versailles was flooded with ornaments of luxury in the time of Louis XIV, whereas the Medieval ideal of abstinence from luxury discouraged certain material productions among some groups. "But," Cantril argued, "new non-material traits [as a rule] are not usually consonant with prevailing attitudes ..." because they "necessitate a change of value rather than a mere extension in the range of inclusiveness of value" -- as is the case with material traits. 46 In other words, "the creators of new material traits have usually suggested only more efficient or more elaborate ways in which existing attitudes may find expression." 47 Cantril's analysis was one of the more thoughtful efforts to account for the unequal rates of change between different parts of culture.

Sociologist George A. Lundberg drew even more explicitly on psychological categories in order to shed light on "societal pathology." Lundberg's starting point was the concept of pathology: behavior which deviates sufficiently in a disapproved direction from an accepted norm. The most common form of psycho-pathology in the western world, noted Lundberg, is schizophrenia, "an inability to orient oneself effectively to one's present and changing environment, which may
result in a lag in the acquisition of ability to use adequate tools for such orientation." 48 Lundberg continued:

There is no doubt in my mind that the major pathological pattern in the western world today is the schizoid attempt to function under two mutually incompatible ideologies, namely, 1. the scientific and 2. the animistic or theological. A major part of our culture, namely, the material and technological aspects, rests squarely upon the scientific orientation. Our social arrangements rest equally unmistakably upon a theological or a metaphysical foundation. 49

Lundberg claimed that this "cleavage in the thoughtways" was the "basic pathology of which the more familiar and superficial 'problems' which occupy our textbooks are only the symptoms." 50

Like a number of others, Lundberg attempted to formulate a mentalistic explanation "cultural" lag -- although, however, he attributed ideological schizophrenia to a scientific-theological cleavage, which strongly suggests a conflict between different historical epochs. Lundberg thus approximated the "temporalization of values" implicit in much progressivist social theory.

Like Lundberg, psychiatrist Franz Alexander, in Our Age of Unreason (1942), attempted to establish "cultural" lag on a psychological foundation:

The phenomenon of cultural lag ... in the last analysis, is always the result of psychological factors, and consists in the persistence of social attitudes which ... represent adjustment to previous conditions, and which have outlived their usefulness. ... The study of institutions divorced from their psychological causes is incomplete. 51

Alexander thus put his finger on, although he did little to solve, a fundamental, vexing puzzle: the problem of simultaneous cultural change and cultural inertia. Like others, he urged that psychological
factors be brought to bear on this problem.

Probably the most original effort to integrate the lag idea with psychological categories was advanced by psychiatrist George Devereux of the Worcester, Massachusetts State Hospital. "It is well known that certain phases of culture trail behind others in development" remarked Devereux.

This phenomenon is known as Cultural Lag. I have shown elsewhere that the phases of culture which trail behind others play the role of the most archaic, irrational, and tyrannical parts of the super-ego in individual neuroses. 52

Devereux, then, took the novel step of drawing a direct parallel between Ogburn's "adaptive culture" and those parts of the psyche which tend to get out of adjustment. Also parallel to the cultural lag theory was Devereux's prescribed cure for social neurosis:

But just as these parts of the superego [i.e., the most archaic, irrational, and tyrannical parts] can be eliminated, without impairing those parts of the superego which ... are ... useful for survival, so it is possible to utilize the scientific part of culture to help us evaluate and manipulate the rest of the socio-cultural environment in a manner permitting both adjustment and survival. 53

Devereux's fusion of "cultural lag" and Freudian thought suggests how a simple concept can inspire attempts to form an all-embracing theory of social and mental pathology.

Functionalist Defenders of the Lag Hypothesis

In many ways, one of the most telling trends revolving around the lag idea was its defense by a number of friendly critics. A number of sociologists wanted to preclude biased applications of Ogburn's
concept by restricting it to purely functional analysis. The lag concept, so they thought, could then occupy a moderate position between, on one hand, personal bias about what is "good" for society, and, on the other hand, an absolute, scientific objectivity. While real objectivity could deal only with what is, the "lag" label could not avoid prescribing what ought to be. Therefore, the functionalist defenders of lag theory held to that kind of "objectivity" which could be created created only by widespread agreement on social values.

This conception of functional "objectivity" did not emerge all at once. In 1919, L. L. Bernard's "objective viewpoint in sociology" set forth a rather arrogant and idealistic conception of sociology. Bernard explicitly stated that social scientists were best qualified to envision the needs and interests of society as a whole. By the 1940's, Joseph Schneider and especially Hornell Hart were arguing that a value consensus must be discovered empirically, and so Hart gained great confidence from the emergence of public opinion survey techniques. The other defenders of "cultural lag" ranged in between the positions occupied by Bernard and Hart, and assumed that basic values were either obvious to everyone or else could be easily ascertained. James Woodward best represents the friendly critics, with his argument that "cultural lag" is indeed an evaluative concept, yet need not foist the sociologist's personal ethical standards on others if it is restricted to analysis of social conditions which almost anyone would agree are dysfunctional. It is crucial to note that, even in this second, more circumspect approach to lag analysis advocated by Woodward and
others, the social scientist still retains a special status as codifier of social values as well as manager of their implementation.

Before preceding, we should observe the weakness of an outright claim to objectivity in defense of the lag hypothesis. "For the past few years," observed sociologist Abbott Herman in 1937, "the concept of lag has been under fire." 54 Herman distilled two central questions in the debate over lag. First, is mechanical invention the pace-setter in introducing social change? Second, does the interrelatedness of culture demand an adjustment to the part which is changing? Herman gave a firm "yes" to both of these questions simply by arguing that most people "regard the productive process as inherently good. . . ." 55 Like Ogburn, Herman assumed that current technological progress provides a good and workable standard to which other institutions should conform. Thus, he was able to convince himself that

Ogburn is not concerned with subjective valuations. He finds the machine is at present the pace-setter in change, and therefore concludes that the direction of adjustment is automatically determined. (Italics mine.) 56

Although Herman failed to convincingly defend the lag theory, his comments nevertheless betray an idea -- the assumption that technological civilization is "inherently good" -- which was indeed widely shared, and which, in the eyes of many, made the lag hypothesis seem free of problems.

Indiana University's John H. Mueller launched a more discriminating defense of the concept by distinguishing between "true
lag" and "spurious lag," the latter involving subjective bias. Mueller noted that instances of true lag, "although less frequently employed in sociological literature than the 'spurious lag,' " can be identified through "objective observation . . . and measurement." 57 True lag, Mueller declared, is "accompanied by disorganization, i.e., there is a tension which it is considered desirable to alleviate by closing the lag. . . . However, the measurement of the lag does not depend upon this desire." 58 Mueller's illustrations of "true lag," included the changes in wages after prices, and in county governments after federal trends. And yet, as others argued, Mueller thus reduced lag analysis to a mere description of relationships, while failing to suggest a method for interpreting their sociological significance. 59

While Herman and Mueller argued for the actual objectivity of lag when properly used, James Woodward of Temple University suggested that the starting point for "true lag" is to forthrightly admit the necessity of evaluation. Woodward distinguished between moral evaluation and "the inductive, scientific analysis of functional appropriateness" such as one finds in psychology, a discipline which cannot escape forming conceptions of the healthy and unhealthy state of the human mind. 60 He acknowledged that,

unless we contrast the 'is' with the 'ought to be,' there is no room for any such concepts as culture lag, social rigidity (as social), or, in their implications, folkways, mores or institutionalizations. . . . Hence the concepts culture lag and social rigidity become non-sensical for any except a functional science. 61

Woodward thus advanced a familiar argument (yet one with limited applicability), that a "functional" standard of evaluation is not
only permissible but is "inescapable" in social science. 62

In defending legitimate evaluation, Woodward challenged what he regarded as false claims to objectivity in the social sciences generally. More to the point, he also attacked the pseudo-objectivity of many writers who employed the lag hypothesis. Woodward observed that this insidious kind of evaluation (insidious because it was cloaked in the language of empirical science) appeared in uncritical applications of cultural lag -- "such as we have seen used in texts or in class discussions." 63 Woodward described ten such applications of the theory, beginning with one which all would agree upon: immigrant women who were accustomed to cleaning their cooking pots with Mediterranean beach sand continued this practice on muddy urban shores in America. "The time between their arrival in this country and their cessation of this method of cleansing . . . is the period of cultural lag and can be exactly measured," concluded Woodward. 64 Other examples include the persistence of the patriarchal family, of nationalism (as opposed to internationalism), and of private enterprise. The list proceeds toward illustrations "upon which little or no agreement could be found," which implicitly advocate sexual license and atheism. 65 While Woodward deplored such excesses of interpretation, he argued that they could be avoided if the lag concept were used cautiously and confined to functional analysis. The limitation of this argument, of course, concerns those issues on which there is no consensus as to what is truly "functional."

Historian Charles Beard, like Woodward, defended evaluative
goal-setting as a legitimate aspect of social science in his review of

Recent Social Trends -- a work which is pervaded by the lag idea.

Beard was mainly concerned that agreed-upon social ends be stated explicitly in the course of any social investigation:

As a whole, the work reveals the strength and weakness of the empirical spirit in which it seems to have been conceived and planned. Its empiricism has collected mountains of facts. . . . But, happily, it frequently breaks the bondage imposed by a limited quest for conclusions of strict scientific determination, and assets values, defends them, and calls for individual and collective planning for the purpose of bringing these values into fruition. The spirit penetrates the barricade of neutrality. And this is fortunate for the advance of social philosophy." 66

While Beard applauded the social values which appeared in

Recent Social Trends, he regretted the fact that they were often surreptitiously advanced. Beard also hinted at a goal which was implicitly shared by other functionalist defenders of the lag hypothesis; he predicted that "the next great survey undertaken in the name of the social sciences may begin boldly with a statement of values agreed upon, and then utilize science to discover the conditions, limitations, inventions, and methods involved in realization." 67 In other words, social scientists needed to discover or posit a body of shared values, so that their evaluations could be made openly.

In 1945, sociologist Joseph Schneider offered a quintessential functionalist description of lag as a mechanical malfunction. He observed that "Ogburn has always held in his writings on cultural lag that the parts of culture are related to each other in a manner analogous to a machine, an engine, or a clock." Thus,

malfunctioning becomes as much a fact of observation as does the
loss of tension of a value spring in an automobile engine. . . . A mechanistic exposition of how culture changes does not admit values anywhere as a substitute for facts. The social scientist qua scientist makes no moral judgements. Values are to him only data, to be studied like other phenomena. 68

This illustration shows how functionalism dovetailed with the rhetorical power of "lag." Since certain social ends can be presupposed, the principle task is to so manage the different parts of society so that they progress at equal rates toward those ends -- i.e., by not letting one part lag behind. Schneider was fully aware that the lag hypothesis was potentially contaminated by a covert progressivism. Like Woodward, however, he was confident that "lag" was still valid if sociologists could achieve sufficient objectivity in their conceptions of "functional appropriateness."

Duke University sociologist Hornell Hart set himself this very task, of empirically discovering the widely-held values which would form the basis for lag analysis. In "Cultural Lag -- a Controversial Concept," Hart responded to objections to Ogburn's theory, and claimed that "the valuational aspects of the lag concept can be dealt with verifiably." 69 He constructed empirical tests to find the value consensus within which a lag situation may be defined:

Any legitimate objection to the valuational implications of the cultural-lag concept may be eliminated by stating, explicitly and objectively, the value-frame within which the lag to be investigated is conceived, and by developing verifiable and reliable indexes of the values involved. 70

As an example, Hart pointed to the universal agreement that it is undesirable to kill or maim through automobile accidents. In a similar spirit, James Woodward speculated that sociology may in the
future be called upon to

institutionalize a scientific procedure of observation and of tabulation of the results of action into self-validating principles of behavior. . . . Thus society as a whole may become more insistent that sociology, along with the other functional sciences, develop the requisite self-validating criteria of functional appropriateness. 71

We have seen in this chapter a litany of acceptance and application of Ogburn's lag hypothesis. "Cultural lag" was clearly a significant facet of early-twentieth-century American sociological theory. This was especially true during the 1930's, at the same time that the attacks on the concept were heaviest. It was the built-in progressivism of the lag idea which allowed many writers to overlook -- and for a number of sociologists to actually defend against -- these criticisms. We now turn to those progressivist themes in interwar social thought which supported "cultural lag" in its time of need.
We have seen in the preceding chapters both the favorable reception and the penetrating criticisms accorded to the cultural lag hypothesis. How then can we account for the widespread acceptance of "cultural lag" during the late 1920's and the 1930's, when these were the very years in which the criticisms were heaviest? In order to understand the plausibility of the lag hypothesis, we must look once again at how it fit in with the assumptions held by many social thinkers. We have explored interwar progressivism somewhat already in the chapter on "The Rhetoric of Lag." In that discussion, we focused on the belief in progress, and the aspiration to the role of social "managers," on the part of sociologists. The present chapter will explore these themes further, only here aiming at a more thorough overview of relevant themes in interwar social thought. We will see striking parallels between Ogburn's ideas and those of other thinkers -- including even the growing doubts held by some about the benefits of technological civilization. This sympathy between Ogburn and his intellectual environment was such as to actually overcome, at least for a while, the negative impact of the critics.

The Progressive Confidence of "Cultural Lag"

In spite of doubts on the part of some intellectuals, American social thought during the interwar era tilted toward optimism -- the belief that progress is possible, and is indeed the norm against which
we should measure social experience. Ogburn’s own confidence is seen, for example, in his declaration that “the curve of increasing inventions has been fairly steadily upward since the beginning . . . even through the fall of Rome, the decline of Greece and through the Dark Ages. . . .” ¹ Ogburn’s fault-finding, moreover, couched in terms of cultural lag, applied only to “social institutions,” not to technology per se. This balance between social criticism and acquiescence to "normative technology" -- often conceived in terms of cultural lag -- was held by many professional social scientists. Sociologist Kimball Young of the University of Wisconsin, although overstating the degree of consensus on the issue, was nonetheless able to claim that probably no one doubts the advantages which have accrued to modern material culture. . . . On the other hand many dislocations have arisen from the failure of the non-material culture, especially connected with societal organization, to keep pace with the new material culture patterns. ²

Young’s familiar message was that, while cultural lag is a problem, the basic direction of social change is good. This same balance appeared in Robert Lynd’s Knowledge for What? (1939). Lynd remarked that "the depression has made us acutely aware of the fact that our brilliant technological skills are shackled to the shambling gait of an institutional Caliban." ³ Lynd thus described a sluggish, "shambling" institutional culture -- a picture which, though not exactly sanguine, nevertheless showed admiration for "our brilliant technological skills." Lynd apparently agreed with Ogburn concerning the relative progress which had been made by technology and social institutions. The advance of science and technology, the fundamental
fact of modern social change, was good in and of itself. Historian Harry Elmer Barnes similarly stressed the need to balance the degree of progress achieved in the two main parts of culture:

As to the question of the possibility of artificially accelerating human progress and cultural achievements, there is no doubt about our power to improve our material culture. The great problem, as Professor Veblen has so profoundly stated is as to whether we can secure anything like a parallel improvement of the institutional aspects of our social heritage or whether civilization will perish because of a fatally great disparity between our technology and our social institutions. 4

The "disparity" that Barnes referred to, although attributed to Veblen, obviously expressed the essence of Ogburn's lag thesis. More important, Barnes closely connected the lag idea to his firm belief in a "progressive and optimistic view of history." For Barnes, the challenge was to use human intelligence to make institutional progress commensurate with the progress occurring inexorably in technology and science.

Temple University's James Woodward expressed a high degree of cultural optimism by arguing that, while lags are inevitable, they will also inevitably die out. As he surveyed the immediate future, Woodward forecast a "constantly aggravated tendency toward maladjustment and cultural lag." 5 Nevertheless, in spite of this dire prediction for the short run, Woodward was confident that scientific values would soon be diffused throughout society and everyday living. He emphasized, moreover, the results of this spread of new values:

To the extent to which this occurs, of course, culture lag is obviated, one element in the conflict having been assimilated quite into the other. Thus, while there is a transitional tendency for culture lag to become more aggravated, we think there are
significant factors tending to minimize it in the long run. . . . (Italics mine.)

Even in the depths of the Depression, a popular magazine reflected the essential optimism of Ogburn’s lag hypothesis. The editors of Collier’s noted that, historically, technological inventions have caused new social problems. They concluded, however, that “only the most superficial observers of the machine . . . can be discouraged at the outlook.” This confidence was based on the expectation that adjustments would soon be made to problems such as technological unemployment. The editors predicted that we shall take unemployment insurance in our stride as previously we adopted workmen’s compensation laws without a flutter. The really revolutionary [i.e., technological] changes occur before we realize what has happened. We are called on chiefly to adjust ourselves to what has already been accomplished. It is wise, however, not to delay too long to do even the obvious. 

In other words, "adjustment" is moderate (i.e., not "revolutionary") and achievable, and social harmony can be expected so long as society does not allow "lags" to last too long.

As the appearance of the lag idea in Collier’s suggests, calls for institutional adjustment, coupled with sanguine appraisals of technology, were common not only among sociologists, but were part of American culture generally during the interwar years. As historian Warren Susman noted, the Chicago World’s Fair of 1933, dedicated to "A Century of Progress," was the culmination of a variety of efforts intended "sometimes to chasten and always to reassure" the public concerning America’s "machine civilization." (Italics mine.) Appraisals of modern society often included "pep talks" to boost
morale and urge commitment to further progress. Reassurance and morale boosting were plainly the aim of Charles Beard and his colleagues in *Whither Mankind?* (1928). Beard concluded that "nowhere on these pages is there a signal for surrender or retreat. . . ."

While the contributors to his book were "not oblivious to the evils of the modern order . . . they do not concede that any other system, could it be freely chosen in place of machine civilization, would confer more dignity upon human nature. . . ." 11

Beard's assurances about "machine civilization" also hinted at the familiar material/non-material dichotomy of culture, and implied a deceptively-simple solution to the problems of modernity:

Under the *machine and science*, the . . . sources of *aesthetics, religion, and humanism* -- are not destroyed. They remain essential parts of our nature. But the conditions under which they must operate, the channels they must take, the potentialities of their action are all changed. These ancient forces will become powerful in the modern age just in the proportion that men and women accept the inevitability of science and the machine, understand the nature of the civilization in which they must work, and turn their faces resolutely to the future. (Italics mine.) 12

Beard suggested, in other words, that the breach between science and the "ancient forces" of humanism could be healed only if "the machine and science" were accepted as normative, and all other parts of culture were adjusted to that standard.

A similar faith in progress and adjustment is evident in *Men and Machines* (1929) by popular social critic Stuart Chase. Chase deplored the reigning "policy of drift" in regard to technology, yet did not succumb to despair. "Man is not the slave of his machines," Chase observed, "but he has allowed them to run unbridled, and his next
great task is, by one method or another, to break them into his
service. . ." 13 Although Chase (and others such as Beard and Lynd)
did not always say as much, they implied that a program of "social
invention" was needed to bring about adaptation to the beneficent
trend of scientific and mechanical invention.

"Social Invention" and "Lagging Social Science"

Ogburn and like-minded social theorists felt that Western
societies manifested, not an overabundance of technological invention,
but an undersupply of "social invention." This term was used
synonymously with others such as social "control," "planning," and
"intelligence," and typically stood for a variety of items on the
liberal-progressive reform agenda. Ogburn advocated "social
invention" when he charged that a "scarcity of invention in the
adaptive culture" was one of the reasons for cultural lag. 14 Indeed,
the social invention concept lent plausibility to the lag hypothesis,
since "social invention" linked Ogburn's thesis to widely-held
progressivist assumptions. As sociologist Robert K. Folsom claimed in
1928, "social invention is the only sure road to progress." 15

Perhaps the classic statement of the social invention idea was
L. L. Bernard's "Invention and Social Progress" (1923). Like Ogburn,
Bernard was impressed by technological invention, yet argued that the
main need of the present was "social invention" -- in order to keep
pace with technology. Bernard's examples of "projected [i.e.,
intentionally planned] social invention" included John Dewey's
educational reforms, the commission and city manager forms of
government, the profit-sharing plan for workers, and wages boards to
reduce labor-management conflicts. 16 Like Ogburn, Bernard noted
that, while there is little opposition to technological invention, there
is still opposition to institutional change:

Our failure adequately to apply science to the perfection of social
organization is . . . in large measure due to the opposition of
prejudice, ignorance, and self-interest to interference with the
old social order to which men have become adjusted. Adequate
social progress can be achieved only by removing this opposition
and by placing a premium upon social inventions. . . . 17

According to Bernard, "social invention" was only in its infancy.
Apparently taking his cue from Ogburn, Bernard concluded that "our
social organization now lags behind our physical achievements." 18

But where could "inventors" be found to carry out a program of
"social invention?" L. L. Bernard observed that

mechanical and industrial improvement . . . has done much for the
progress of mankind and may accomplish vastly more in the
future. But the greatest advances in the future will probably come
through the application of . . . inventions in the social sciences to
the improvement of our social institutions and organization. 19

As his final sentence indicates, Bernard argued that the social
sciences were the best source of innovation for the social realm.

The idea of "social invention" was reinforced by another theme
which appeared often in early-twentieth-century sociology: "lagging
social science." This notion expanded the idea of "cultural lag" to
suggest that social science lags behind natural science. Despite
appearances, "lagging social science" was not an admission of defeat --
even though the notion was sometimes couched in tones of lament --
but was a call for the social sciences to be given more power to analyze
and manage society. A classic source for this theme was Lester Ward’s
Pure Sociology (1903), a point of origin which suggests the hopeful
spirit in which sociologists later invoked the phrase. 20

The idea of lagging social science appeared especially
frequently after the First World War. Even before Ogburn published
Social Change, L. L. Bernard bemoaned the fact that sociology "lagged
behind its companion progress in other sciences dealing with
non-human phenomena." 21 Later in the 1920’s, social critic
Raymond Fosdick claimed that "it is this gap between the brilliant
development of scientific knowledge on the one hand and the almost
stationary position of our knowledge of man on the other that
constitutes the danger." 22 F. Stuart Chapin found that "the social
sciences lag behind the physical sciences in precision of measurement
and accuracy of prediction." 23 And, as a sociologist writing in the
1930's claimed,

a cultural lag unfortunately exists between man’s ability to invent
mechanical devices and his ability to adjust to these
manifestations of his creative intelligence. Man has done well in
making machines; he would do better perhaps to subordinate
them to desirable social ends. 24

These examples suggest that the themes of "lagging social
science," "social invention," and "social management," tended to
reinforce one another -- and to create an environment of plausibility
for the lag hypothesis.

It would be too simple to say that the ideas described so far
were strictly self-serving notions promoted by sociologists, since other
thinkers observed the need for improved social science. Perhaps the
most forthright expression of the idea of the social scientist as a
manager of progress, as well as the idea of lagging social science, came
from a professional philosopher. As the Great Depression deepened,
Paul Schilpp of Northwestern University hailed the social scientist as
the "man of the hour." 25 According to Schilpp,

unless the social scientist shall come to our rescue by developing
in the balance of the twentieth century a knowledge and
understanding of his field which in some fashion shall
approximate the development of the material and mechanical
sciences during the past seventy-five years, our future
achievements in the direction of more material and mechanical
power are likely to be more harmful than helpful to the further
development and progress of mankind. In other words . . . the
great need of the hour is the social scientist. 26

Historian Carl Becker also suggested the lagging social science
theme when he observed that

there is clearly some failure in co-ordinating the expanding
activities of men, some radical discord between man's capacity to
control the forces of Nature and his capacity to subdue his social
relations to rational direction. 27

Because the notion of lagging social science was so
common-sensical, and apparently was a matter widespread agreement,
it helped to legitimate the cultural lag thesis. "Lagging social science"
suggested that the linchpin of all cultural lags was the
underdevelopment of the social disciplines. It was the one lag which
explains -- and the removal of which is the most important step
toward solving -- cultural lags in all other areas. Catching up this lag
would, of course, entail giving a freer hand to social scientists. Such
an endowment of power to the experts was especially necessary
because, as some thinkers claimed, the underdevelopment of the 
social sciences was due not only to the youthfulness of these 
disciplines, but to outside opposition as well. According to L. L. 
Bernard, lag-creating factors such as prejudice, tradition -- and a fear 
of sociologists devising social goals -- originate in the lay population:

Such an attitude we should expect of the masses. . . . Not 
understanding the values arrived at abstractly or the synthetic and 
objective viewpoint of the social scientist, not appreciating society 
as a large and objective or organic whole, they remain partisans of 
the existing order. 28

Bernard's comments well illustrate the elitist attitude among 
some post-World War intellectuals: it was not the social scientists who 
were to be blamed for the unrealized potential of their disciplines, but 
resistance from the irrational masses. The social disciplines could 
surely catch up with the natural sciences, if given the necessary 
dereference and funding. This attitude explains why sociologists were 
so ready to admit that their own field was lagging: it was not all their 
fault. In the next chapter, we will see how the advent of atomic power 
gave "lagging social science" -- and the cultural lag hypothesis itself -- 
a heightened relevance in the late 1940's.

"Disillusionment" and Ogburn's Pessimism

We have stressed so far that Ogburn's impact on interwar social 
thought was made possible by a widespread optimism concerning 
scientific progress, and by the desire among social scientists to 
enhance their cultural authority. We turn now to Ogburn's departures 
from this progressive optimism -- and are concerned with a more
modest aspect of the plausibility of the lag thesis. This is not so much a matter of why "cultural lag" was embraced in a positive sense, but a suggestion concerning why some of Ogburn's theoretical inconsistencies went unnoticed by the critics. Ogburn's equivocations were not seen as cases of outright confusion, because they accurately reflected tension points in social thought generally.

In the chapter on Ogburn's post-1922 writings, we gave several examples of Ogburn's occasional stress on the "inevitability" of cultural lag. Despite his usual confidence, Ogburn declared that "no prospective integration of state and industry is expected to deliver us in the future from grave social disturbances." 29 This same equivocal theme was expressed in social theory at large. On one hand, we can recall Robert Lynd's essentially optimistic view that social institutions, as compared with technology, are changing too slowly: "Our brilliant technological skills are shackled to the shambling gait of an institutional Caliban." 30 But on the other hand, historian Carl Becker complained that technology is changing too quickly: "The acquisition of new implements of power too swiftly outruns the necessary adjustment of habits and ideas." 31 These statements, made within a few years of each other by prominent social thinkers, illustrate the coexistence of opposite views of the lag idea -- opposite with respect to the beneficence of modern machine civilization. Becker vented his pessimism when he remarked that a full adaptation of institutions to technology may never be possible: "It seems indeed unlikely that the adjustment can ever be more than clumsily effected so long as the
multiplication of implements of power continues to increase the complexity and to accelerate the tempo of social change." 32 In a similar spirit, Joseph Krutch's doleful essay The Modern Temper (1929) claimed that "man's ingenuity outruns his intelligence...." 33

Even a textbook description of Ogburn's hypothesis revealed a certain ambivalence (or confusion) over the implications of cultural lag. James H. S. Bossard, like many other sociologists, held that modern social problems result largely from

the failure of our adaptive culture to keep pace with our rapidly changing, problem-creating material change. Modern society, in other words, persists in retaining ways of doing things...which are...not adapted to cope successfully with the circumstances and conditions which our marvelous material advance has created. 34

Based upon Bossard's description, it is hard to tell whether material change should be considered as "marvelous" or as something which "creates problems." Bossard thus neatly summarized the mixed optimism and pessimism on the part of many social scientists. Hence, Ogburn's own measure of ambivalence over the meaning of cultural lag reflected tensions in the wider intellectual environment.

A second inconsistency in Ogburn's interwar writings was his occasional mixture of the theories of cultural lag and biological lag -- theories with contrasting explanations of social problems. 35 Although Ogburn did not emphasize (by name) his "biological" theory after 1922, he did describe it -- yet always mixed in with a discussion of cultural lag. We saw several examples of this mixture in the chapter on Ogburn's post-1922 writings. What is striking about
interwar social thought is that, not only was the "biological lag" idea expressed by thinkers other than Ogburn, but others as well mixed the two lag concepts.

Probably the closest approximation of Ogburn's biological lag theory appeared in *Sex in Civilization* (1929) -- which was a "prototype" for the discontent literature of the 1930's. 36 British sexologist Havelock Ellis argued that, in order to gain any real understanding of human sexuality, one must first study it apart from civilization. The researcher, Ellis advised, should keep in mind that "civilization has perhaps only been discoverable . . . during the past ten thousand years, while man, from the first a sexual animal and the descendent of sexual animals, has been living for perhaps a million years. . . ." 37 Ellis thus made precisely the same point that Ogburn had made several years earlier, that culture is dynamic while man's "original nature" is relatively static. Humanity's sexual nature, therefore, conforms to patterns which were set long before civilization arose. Ellis argued, moreover, that "we may even see reason to believe that these [innate sexual] laws and their meaning were more clearly realized in more primitive stages of society than they are now. . . ." 38 We see, then, that Ellis agreed with Ogburn that primitive culture was better adjusted than is modern culture to humanity's basic psychological needs and impulses. Other social theorists advanced similar themes. 39

As we have noted, others beside Ogburn blended the concepts contained in Ogburn's two lag theories. Thorstein Veblen was probably
the most authoritative source of mixed biological and cultural lag
ccepts. (Although Veblen's seminal writings long predated the
interwar years, they were still highly influential in that era.) Veblen
held that "instincts," which survive from the pre-pecuniary era,
constitute a good kind of "survival." Veblen's "instincts" and Ogburn's
"original human nature" both entail pre-historic psychological traits
which are in conflict with modern life. Moreover, both Veblen and
Ogburn held this "biological lag" outlook simultaneously with the
cultural lag idea. 40

Robert Lynd also gave credence to both theories of
maladjustment when he argued that "contradictions" in American
society derive from cultural lag and

also from the fact that the things the mass of human beings
basically crave as human beings ... are often overlaid by, and not
infrequently distorted by, the cumulating emphases that a culture
may take on under circumstances of rapid change ...

-- an apparent reference to biological lag. (Italics mine.) 41 In
effect, Lynd claimed that both sources of maladjustment produce the
same results, which suggests that he regarded cultural and biological
lag as nearly interchangeable!

In this chapter, we have seen the dominant confidence in
machine civilization and in the ability of social science to "adjust"
institutions to technological progress. At the same time, however, a
number of authoritative thinkers had their doubts about the prospects
for social adjustment. With each of his lag theories individually, and
even in his occasional combination of them, Ogburn reflected the often
confused sense of social maladjustment perceived by many intellectuals. Ogburn, then, was one among many influential thinkers who felt sure that people, their institutions, and technological culture were somehow out of kilter -- although the cultural lag idea dominated other interpretations since it was the most progressivist and reformist approach to social analysis. 42 The many criticisms of Ogburn's ideas were thus, for a while at least, drowned out by the sympathetic resonance of interwar social thought.
CHAPTER 11
THE POST-WAR LIFE OF THE LAG HYPOTHESIS

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. As the New Republic observed several weeks later, the dawn of the atomic age revealed a dangerous gulf between the social and natural sciences:

The science of human personality and of the society composed of human individuals has lagged far behind the science of the physical universe. . . . It is high time for us to concentrate our attention and our ingenuity on achieving as penetrating, as accurate, as cool and as competent a body of knowledge about how to choose our aims and how to effectuate them as we have hitherto devoted to discovering the secrets of matter.  

The New Republic editorial was only the first of a new round of summons, although now with heightened intensity, for reform in the institutions of social control. In the months after the war's end there appeared many such calls, often employing the lag metaphor, for the social disciplines "catch up" with the natural science which had harnessed the power of the atom.  

This widespread theme in postwar social thought breathed new life, at least temporarily, into Ogburn's hypothesis of cultural lag.

During the decade or so before the advent of atomic power, however, an intellectual trend was building which gradually undercut the plausibility of the lag idea. This trend was a new skepticism about using the concept of "progress" as a yardstick for measuring social phenomena. Thus, the widespread progressivism which over-rode the critics of "cultural lag" during the 1930's was giving way. At the same time, significantly, articles which applied lag analysis were appearing
less frequently in the major sociological journals. "Cultural lag" was increasingly relegated to the less prominent publications and authors. 3 The 1940's was thus a transitional time for the lag concept. Accordingly, before looking at the postwar era itself, we must first turn to the prior decade.

**The Decline of Progressivism**

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the lag hypothesis derived much of its staying power from the confidence, on the part of many thinkers, in technological development, as well as in the ability of social science to effect institutional "adjustment." In other words, "lag" was oriented toward a view of social progress as both inevitable in the technical realm and achievable in the social and ideological realms. But this outlook, which helped give plausibility to the lag hypothesis, was gradually deteriorating. A reaction was indicated, first, by the voices expressing doubts about "machine civilization" during the interwar years. More specifically, there was a "sustained attack upon the idea of progress as an organizing principle in research" -- so noted by Margaret Hodgen in 1936. 4 A loss of faith in progress as normative, Hodgen argued, was implicit in the various criticisms of the doctrine of survivals. A similar skepticism appeared in Frank H. Hankins' presidential address to the American Sociological Society in 1939. Hankins argued that social progress can be achieved, but not on the grand scale that was once thought possible: "We have lived for a hundred and fifty years . . . in a culture imbued with the
concept of progress, and this concept is still in widespread use as the final justification of proposals for social action." 5 While Hankins noted the continuing popularity of the idea of progress, he clearly tried to distance himself from this trend. He also rejected the old social evolutionist goal of "perfect adaptation" as a purely deductive, non-scientific ideal. 6

Significantly, this skepticism about progressivist assumptions was increasingly applied to the lag hypothesis itself. As we saw in an earlier chapter, C. Wright Mills concluded that

the model in which institutions lag behind technology and science involves a positive evaluation of natural science and of orderly progressive change. Loosely, it derives from a liberal continuation of the Enlightenment with its full rationalism, its messianic and now politically naive admiration of physical science as a kind of thinking and activity, and with its concept of time as progress. 7

Other sociologists as well were beginning to detect the characteristic ideological slant of the lag hypothesis. Joseph Schneider pointed out in 1945 that, unless handled carefully, the lag concept served as "a projection into the present, but in different dress, of a historical and traditional interpretation of the process of change, i.e., the idea of progress." 8 In the late 1940's, William Goode noted the persistence of Ogburn's argument that technology changes "faster" than institutions and ideas do -- in spite of numerous criticisms of this notion. "That it should be so widely accepted," Goode argued, "represents an interesting cultural bias in favor of the spread and growth of science and technology." 9

Goode's statement echoes those by C. Wright Mills and Joseph
Schneider in suggesting that many writers were blind to the subjective character of the lag concept due to their "bias" in favor of technological progress. The very appearance of this charge, however, also suggests that some sociologists were becoming wary of efforts to rank institutions according to an ideal standard of social development. This new awareness represented a departure from earlier criticisms of the lag concept which, insightful though they were, omitted any mention of its progressivist orientation. As the above examples indicate, a more root and branch critique had to await the 1940's. Because the earlier reviews failed to identify the source of the lag theory's appeal, they had only a limited effect on its popularity.

Along with their attacks on progressivism, some sociologists began to moderate their ambitions for "social management." ASS president Frank H. Hankins made this cautionary observation: "If I am not mistaken there are a great many sociologists and other social scientists who still have somewhat exaggerated notions as to the extent to which conscious social direction is possible." 10 Hankins reasoned that, if even the totalitarian governments had difficulty with social planning, then it must be "immensely more difficult, if not impossible, under democratic conditions." 11 Likewise, in the mid-1940's, a sociologist predicted that "if social science consists of a body of systematic, validated, trustworthy facts ... the influence of scientists many some day come to rank with that of politicians and pressure groups." 12 He advised his colleagues to meanwhile strip themselves of impluses to dictate the ways in which their
research findings shall be used, and ... work with enthusiasm for
the discovery and validation of knowledge, trusting that the
complex but slow process of cultural change will in due time
make use of their findings. 13

To the extent that this chastened attitude toward social
"management" was accepted by sociologists, the attractiveness of
"cultural lag" must have diminished for many thinkers.

Another trend of the early 1940's, along with moderation of
the management ideal, was an attenuation of the idea of "lagging
social science." Frank Hankins provided a cogent explanation for the
comparative lack of authority held by social scientists:

The contrast between the application of social thought and the
findings of the natural sciences is striking. The latter sciences
have, for the most part, escaped from the taboos of popular
sentiments and have acquired an esoteric quality that gives them
an unimpeachable authority. ... Applications of the sciences,
therefore, remain largely in the hands of experts. In the social
sciences, there is an entirely different situation. However
ignorant he may be of the theoretical aspects of the social
problem, the average man feels fully entitled to an opinion. 14

Hankins realized that the social sciences were "lagging," but he
also suggested that this condition was unavoidable. The reason for this
state of affairs, simply, was that "the applications of the findings of the
social sciences are ... ordinarily made through political agencies"
while "social scientists are seldom chosen to positions of political
responsibility. They are, in fact, widely distrusted." 15 Hankins
concluded, in other words, that sociologists must reconcile
themselves to at least some of the limitations of "lagging social
science." And yet, several years after these comments were made,
many thinkers were again clamoring for the social sciences to be given
a greater role in public policy.
The Atomic Crisis

We have seen the waning of progressivism during the 1940's, and that this was accompanied by a weakening of support for "cultural lag" and the ideal of management. The advent of the atomic bomb, however, quickly changed all of this. It gave intellectuals a renewed sense that the social sciences were "lagging" -- and thus ill equipped to tame the destructive potential of natural science and technology. The late 1940's therefore saw renewed calls, only now with an increased intensity of tone, for expert social "management." Many of these calls, moreover, were couched in the language, or at least expressed the idea, of "cultural lag." In a 1947 issue of Time, for example, American Psychiatric Association president William C. Menninger observed that "we have learned to eliminate space and to annihilate people, but we still lag far behind in learning how to get along with each other." 16 Similarly, Duke University sociologist Hornell Hart declared that "the crux of the atomic crisis is the lag of social science behind the accelerating upsurge in the technologies of destruction." 17

Other scholars echoed these themes. At the 1946 American Historical Association convention, association president Sidney Fay observed that

natural science has far outstripped social science. Our social skills have not kept pace with our technical skills. The consequences to society of this unbalance have been disastrous. We have discovered how to split the atom but not how to make sure that it will be used for the improvement and not the
destruction of civilization. 18

Bureau of Census chief Philip M. Hauser likewise saw the need for the social sciences to rise to the occasion of the atomic crisis:

Man's almost fantastic advances in harnessing the forces of nature can in large measure be traced to the laboratories of the physical and natural sciences. No corresponding connection can be traced between our social, economic, and political institutions and the social sciences. 19

Hauser therefore urged a renewed commitment to building up the social disciplines, and asked whether scholars in these fields were ready for the supreme challenge of providing enough knowledge about human institutions and human relationships in time to prevent the suicide of the human race potentially inherent in the anachronism represented by our social institutions and practices in our contemporary physical world. 20

Perhaps the most dramatic expression of all of these laments appeared in a letter which Ogburn and seven University of Chicago faculty members wrote to President Truman (reminiscent of the famous Einstein letter to Roosevelt concerning atomic research). The Chicago academics argued that

it is because the importance of research in the social sciences has not been adequately recognized that we continue to flounder in arriving at some formula which will enable us to deal rationally with atomic energy and the atomic bomb. 21

Clearly, there was widespread agreement among intellectuals in the postwar years on the need for increased authority and funding for the social sciences.

This consensus was accompanied by increased activity on the part of Ogburn and his defenders. Indeed, Ogburn was one of the first to see that the bomb created a golden opportunity to remedy the trend of lagging social science. In "Sociology and the Atom" (1946),
Ogburn argued that,

just as it takes time, money, and research on the part of physicists, chemists, and engineers to produce an atomic bomb, so time, money, and research are necessary for sociologists to uncover the social effects of this new source of power. The ready advice of editorial writers, lecturers, preachers, columnists, and radio commentators is not worth very much, perhaps even less than the advice of natural scientists [1] on the social implications of their discoveries. It is the function of the natural scientist to make the atomic bomb, but of the social scientist to say what the social consequences are likely to be. 22

This passage was one of Ogburn's most explicit statements advocating a special role for social scientists. Part of his strategy was to discount the opinions of all non-specialists. He implied that the dangerous new global situation required the attention of an elite of scientific experts. But Ogburn also envisaged a clearer division of labor among the sciences, which would involve limiting the authority of natural science to its own sphere. He greatly devalued the pronouncements of natural scientists outside of their disciplines, in that he judged the opinions of laymen to be worth "even less" than those of physicists! Of course, Ogburn's positive goal was to elevate the status of social scientists. As a practical measure, he urged that more money be spent on social research:

For every subsidized piece of research in natural science there should be corresponding financial aids to research in social science. Since two billion dollars were spent on making the atomic bomb which will produce many social problems, an intelligent society would aid social research to solve the problems the bomb creates. 23

Perhaps more than any thinker besides Ogburn himself, Duke University sociologist Hornell Hart championed the lag idea during the postwar decade. It was especially at this time that Hart wrote articles
on "Atomic Cultural Lag" and "Some Problems of Cultural Lag Which Have Been Solved by Social Science." Hart echoed Ogburn by arguing for increased funding -- and he explicitly linked the growth of the social sciences to their ability to cure cultural lags:

public monies by the billions . . . are devoted to increasing the acceleration of destructiveness, while no remotely comparable funds are provided for the urgently needed researches through which social science might bridge the gap of cultural lag, and point the way toward human survival and continued growth.

Inspired by the massive wartime bomb-building effort, Hart proposed a "Manhattan Project of the Social Sciences." This agency would correct the disparity in funding and research between the natural and social sciences. Hart's plan called for, among other things, an empirical study of social values to defuse the old problem of partisan bias in social planning. To start this process, Hart suggested some "tentative, preliminary basic value assumptions," ranging from "our civilization is worth saving," to "it is to the advantage of society to provide adequate support and resources for at least the best of its social scientists[1]"

The Revival of the Lag Hypothesis

Despite the sometimes partisan nature of Ogburn and Hart's arguments, the atomic crisis was accompanied by a renewed perception of the relevance of "cultural lag." In The Proper Study of Mankind . . . (1948), social critic Stuart Chase touted the lag idea with a gusto reminiscent of many declarations made twenty years earlier:

Some of the most perplexing problems of the present time --
mass unemployment, inadequate housing, economic insecurity -- are really problems of cultural lag. We have the economic tools available to solve many of them, but the community will not permit it. . . . Belief systems have not caught up with the facts. 28

During the late 1940's and the 1950's, Ogburn's writings appeared with a new frequency in the major sociological journals, even though his discussions contributed nothing new as far as theoretical substance. Ogburn's Social Change (1922), moreover, was reprinted (without revision) in 1950. Ogburn's renewed stature as a social thinker is also suggested by his being featured as an authority on technological change in the new International Social Science Bulletin, a UNESCO publication. 29 Similar themes appeared in Technology and Social Change (1957), in which both Ogburn and Hart are featured. 30 By the mid-1950's, historians of sociology Robert and Gisela Hinkle could give this assessment: "Despite numerous criticisms this theory has remained an accepted, if not dominant, interpretation of social and cultural change in American sociology." 31

The atomic crisis thus worked a significant rejuvenation of "cultural lag." Ogburn's own longevity, of course, also had much to do with the staying power of his theory. Ogburn continued to write and publish up until his death in 1959. Also, it is important to note that Ogburn supporters Harry Elmer Barnes and Horrell Hart were older than critics such as Robert Merton and C. Wright Mills. Barnes and Hart came of age intellectually during the Progressive era and perhaps for that reason were loyal to the ideals of progress and adjustment at a time when others were growing skeptical. And yet, with the general decline of progressivism, and then with the moderating of tensions
after the immediate postwar years, the lag idea lost its ideological power source and was increasingly disparaged. C. Wright Mills sounded its death knell when he repeated his earlier analysis -- while adding epithets about "the politically washed-out notion of 'cultural lag' " -- in his influential book *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). 32 In another popular essay, *Invitation to Sociology* (1961), Peter Burger cited cases of "cultural lag" in a purely tongue-in-cheek fashion, in reference to certain aspects of the sociological profession which had become obsolete. 33 Thus, the cultural lag hypothesis could not for long survive the decline of progressive-evolutionist presuppositions in American social thought. And its renewed plausibility in the postwar years could last only so long as the sense of an immediate atomic crisis prevailed.
CONCLUSION
ACCOUNTING FOR THEORETICAL INERTIA

As Princeton sociologist Wilbert Moore commented in 1960, the persistence of Ogburn's lag hypothesis was "itself an interesting example of resistance to change, or a 'lag' not explainable by the hypothesis." 1 This ironic quip was perhaps more accurate than Moore intended it to be. As he suggested, the tenacity of the lag thesis cannot be explained away as yet another case of "cultural lag." That is, it cannot be accounted for in purely "cultural" terms. Just as some thinkers pointed out psychological foundations for the phenomenon of cultural lag, so the longevity of the lag hypothesis must be explained in part by psychological factors. Specifically, it was the ambition of sociologists, as it interacted with the theoretical resources at hand, which made the lag idea attractive. As Ogburn himself argued in Social Change, culture persists because it has "wantability." Within the range of ideas and aspirations available to early-twentieth-century American sociologists, "cultural lag" had a significant degree of wantability because it whispered a promise of greater things for the sociologist and his discipline. Although the lag idea had the power of a long tradition of progressivist thought behind it -- an important part of its staying power -- its surpassing ability to link this tradition to the personal ambitions of social scientists was ultimately what made it plausible in spite of the attacks from critics.

Two factors, then, one cultural/theoretical and the other psychological, combined to create the appeal of "cultural lag." First,
there is the theoretical factor: the progressive-historicist tradition which inspired Ogburn, and at the same time was presupposed by key social thinkers including Dewey, Veblen, and Robinson. Thus, while those who accepted the lag idea had the backing of a long and influential intellectual trend, those who criticized it often did not know what they were up against. By attacking Ogburn's thesis, the critics were really taking on the accumulated weight of a "social heritage" which included Comte, Marx, Morgan, Tylor, and Veblen, as well as many lesser theorists who described maladjustments within the existing order in terms of temporal conflict. This heritage goes back, at least, to Comte's notion that remnants of the "theological" and "metaphysical" stages of historical development should be purged from the present. The influence of this historicist tradition continued strong, moreover, into the first several decades of the twentieth century, and perhaps Ogburn's lag hypothesis should be regarded as one of its last major expressions.

The early critiques of the lag thesis, made during the 1930's, reveal little awareness of the intellectual tradition behind Ogburn's thought. Most of the original critics, including Robert K. Merton, Robert MacIver, Pitirim Sorokin, and Gerhard Meyer, perceptive though they were, failed to emphasize "cultural lag's" progressivist character. The faults they found were those specific to the theory itself, such as the material/non-material dichotomy and the problem of correlation. Only in the 1940's, it appears, did critics begin to notice the faith in technological development which supported the "lag"
approach to social pathology. Prior to this, the progressivist consensus could easily drown out critical voices -- which dismissed the lag idea on the grounds of what seemed to be mere technical deficiencies.

The lag theory appealed to social thinkers not only because it embodied well-accepted presuppositions about progress, but, more specifically, because these presuppositions were hidden, as it were, beneath the surface. They were embedded in the term "lag" itself, which seemed to describe what is rather than to prescribe what ought to be. Ogburn's hypothesis thus appeared to reconcile the tension between the role of advocacy that sociologists wanted, and the image of impartiality that they needed.

It is significant that Ogburn is often perceived in light of his rigorous quantitative research efforts rather than his actual theoretical writings -- an impression which has encouraged some writers to regard Ogburn's social thought as empirical and objectivist. Ogburn himself made appeals for a moratorium on premature theorizing in some of his addresses to fellow sociologists. 2 Accordingly, sociologist Edward Shils concluded that Recent Social Trends "was an ideal theater for Ogburn's talents -- no theoretical adventures, a minimum of generalization, and an ideal of rigorous documentation and quantitative demonstration." 3 And yet, that study was laden with cultural lag analysis and was indeed criticized on this score by Ogburn's own colleague Gerhard Meyer! This image of Ogburn has helped to mask the evaluative nature of his lag theory, and has enabled "cultural lag" to
convey an objectivist, scientific appeal.

The psychological power of the lag theory consisted in its ability to reinforce the aspirations for authority among social scientists. "Cultural lag," in other words, like notions of "progress" and "social control," tended to serve an ideological function. It was an idea which could claim universal validity, and yet chiefly advance the interests of a particular group. That is, it could impart scientific legitimacy to sociologists' drive for social mastery, while avoiding the air of elitism implicit in theories such as E. A. Ross' "social control." While other such versions of social "management" might involve claiming authority, the user of "lag" simply presupposed authority in the very act of attaching the label. Whether he explicitly argued, or merely assumed, that lag analysis measured the degree of strictly functional social adjustment, the sociologist who accepted the hypothesis must have valued his role as problem-definer. This high value placed on the authority of social science, placed by the social scientists themselves, was at the root of the theoretical "inertia" seen in the tenacity of the lag hypothesis. We thus arrive not only at a theoretical and cultural bias, but also at psychological drives -- the "will to power," and the will to meaning and significance, among social scientists (although this class of people is no more prone than others to these aspirations). The lag metaphor, and the belief in scientific progress and social planning -- these were the cultural vehicle by which human ambition in this case expressed itself. With the general decline of progressivism, and then with the abating of the sense of
crisis after the immediate postwar years, the lag idea lost its ideological power source. Therefore, most sociologists shifted their focus to other theoretical channels in which to employ their expertise and fulfill their desire for greater cultural authority.
Abbreviations

ASR  American Sociological Review
AJST  American Journal of Sociology
SF    Social Forces
S and SR  Sociology and Social Research

NOTES: INTRODUCTION


NOTES: CHAPTER ONE


   We should note that, beginning in the 1920's, many sociologists, like Ogburn, used the term "social change" interchangeably with "social evolution," "cultural evolution," and cultural change." These terms are not to be confused with the school of "social evolutionism" -- a particular view of social development -- which by this time had largely been discredited.

2. Ogburn, Social Change, 58.
3. *ibid.*, 43.
4. *ibid.*, 58.
5. Duncan, xiv.
8. *ibid.*, 98.
10. *ibid.*
11. *ibid.*, 85.
12. *ibid.*, 93.
13. *ibid.*, 73.
15. *ibid.*, 77.
18. *ibid.*, 203.
19. *ibid.*
20. *ibid.*, 270.
22. *ibid.*, 273.
23. *ibid.*
24. *ibid.*, 201.
25. *ibid.*, 279.

26. Although Ogburn did not use the term "lag" in connection with this second theory of maladjustment, other sociologists gave it the label "biological lag." See, for example, Don Martindale, "Social

27. Ogburn, Social Change, 286.

28. ibid.

29. ibid., 333.

30. ibid., 286-287.

31. ibid., 336.

32. ibid., 341-342.

33. ibid., 365.

34. ibid., 346.

35. ibid., 344.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO


7. ibid., 87-88.
Ogburn elaborated on this part of his career in a separate address, made on the occasion of his retirement. "I was much interested in socialism, and spent a good deal of time in radical circles," Ogburn noted, referring to his early years of teaching on the West Coast. "One of my prized possessions is a three-volume edition of Karl Marx's works, inscribed to me by the Portland unit of the Industrial Workers of the World. . . ." (Duncan, ix) Ogburn also admitted that at this time "my teaching was a mild indoctrination of a liberal or radical social philosophy." (ibid.)

8. ibid., 88.

9. ibid.


By the time he accepted a professorship at Chicago in 1927, Ogburn was keeping his interests in psychoanalysis and sociology completely separate. See Martin Bulmer, The Chicago School of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 201.

12. ibid., 89-90.


16. ibid.

17. Ogburn, "Cultural Lag as Theory," 90.

18. ibid., 91.


20. ibid.

22. ibid., 134.

23. ibid.

24. Ogburn, 64.


26. ibid., 64.


NOTES: CHAPTER THREE


2. ibid., 266.

   Kroeber often substituted "civilization" for "culture," a habit he acquired when writing on the subject during the First World War -- in order to avoid the Germanic connotation of "Kultur." George W. Stocking Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 267.


6. Duncan, xxi-xxii.

7. Herskovits and Willey, 189-190. Lowie's position is hard to define in this regard. In spite of Herskovitt's and Willey's assessment, other writers have noted the deterministic, anti-psychological trend in Lowie as well as Kroeber. See for example, Charles A. Ellwood, "Recent Developments in Sociology" in *Recent Developments in the Social Sciences*, ed. Edward C. Hayes (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1927), 16.


12. *ibid.*, 63.


The importance that Ogburn attached to eugenics is further suggested in his striking appraisal of the threat this movement posed: "All through the writings of the eugenists is found the implication that a particular culture is quite simply and directly the ability of the racial stock... The result of the spread of the eugenics idea is, like the discovery of natural selection, an overemphasis of the significance of the biological factor in social progress." (*ibid.*, 39; italics mine.) Ogburn suggested, in other words, that the potential impact of eugenics was comparable to that of Darwin's theory of natural selection.


16. *ibid.*, 49.


18. *ibid.*, 59.


Ogburn stressed that, in order to distinguish between cultural and psychological determinants in a particular situation, one must use historical investigation. He acknowledged that both cultural and psychological influences were "present in all social phenomena," yet he argued that any confusion between the two obscures the interpretation of social changes. Ogbum supported his emphasis on a cultural analysis by recalling British anthropologist H. R. River's studies of the blood feud. The feud made a useful example since it was a widespread institution among primitive societies. After historical reconstruction of particular feud traditions, Rivers discovered that in many places feuds were primarily ceremonial in character -- not carried out for revenge as had been supposed. River's findings thus favored a cultural explanation for the persistence of an apparently emotion-driven custom. In sum, Ogburn left no unclaimed territory
between biology and culture. He liquidated, as it were, social psychology as an entity in its own right, and disbursed its explanatory assets to culture and heredity, although culture received the lion's share. William F. Ogburn, "The Historical Method in the Analysis of Social Phenomena" Publications of the American Sociological Society 16 (1921): 74.

20. According to Stocking, "to test the efficacy of culture one . . . pushed the cultural explanaition into the disputed area as far as one could . . ." Race, Culture, and Evolution, 268.


22. Herskovitts and Willey, 189.


Similarly, Charles A. Ellwood, in a summary of "recent developments" in the discipline as of 1927, noted that "the sociological analysis of group life offered by Professor Cooley and Professor Giddings barely falls short of definitely stating . . . the concept of 'culture.' By this concept the sociologist understands the tool-making, institution-making and value-making activities of human groups. . . ." Ellwood, "Recent Developments in Sociology," 12.

24. As sociologist Earle Eubank remarked, the evolutionary view "was dominant in our sociological thinking up to about 1910 or 1915 . . ." The Concepts of Sociology (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1932), 270.


26. ibid., 12.

27. Ogburn, Social Change, 42.


NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1. It is interesting that the affinity between Lewis Henry Morgan's Ancient Society (1877) and Marxist thought was noted by Marx and Engels themselves, who, according to Robert H. Lowie, "accepted and popularized its evolutionary doctrines as being in harmony with their own philosophy. As a result it was promptly translated into various European tongues . . ." Robert H. Lowie, The

2. Ogburn, Social Change, 133.

3. ibid., 55.


7. ibid., 138.

8. Evolutionism was nearer to Ogburn not only chronologically, but was also a step closer in its comparatively greater appearance of scientific objectivity. Social evolutionism was an especially important backdrop to Ogburn because it was much less directly philosophical than was eighteenth-century progressivism. Evolutionism gained this seemingly non-ideological, objectivist cast especially in the post-Darwinian era.

9. Mandelbaum, 49.


12. The tributes to cultural relativism which were standard fare in so many early expositions of the culture concept (e.g., Ruth Benedict's Patterns of Culture, 1934) are not emphasized in Ogburn's writings.


15. Nisbet, 224.

16. ibid., 223.

17. Harry Elmer Barnes, Historical Sociology, (New York: The
18. ibid., 32.

19. Ogburn took the idea of organic cultural interdependence (common to the Boasians) and grafted onto it the notion of unequal rates of change between the parts of culture. Anthropologists such as Kroeber, Wissler, and Lowie, also used the material/non-material categories, but (unlike Ogburn) for descriptive rather than explanatory purposes.


22. ibid., 101.

23. ibid., 101-102.


25. Mandelbaum, 96.

26. ibid., 95.


29. ibid., 119.


31. Mandelbaum, 97.


35. Ogburn, Social Change, 149.
36. Hodgen, 53-54.


39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 529-530.


42. Ibid., 530.

43. Ogburn, Social Change, 152.

44. Ibid., 153.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., 154.

47. Ibid.


49. Ibid., 179.


51. Ibid., 145.

52. Ibid., 150.

NOTES: CHAPTER FIVE

1. Harry Elmer Barnes, Howard Becker, and Frances Bennett Becker, Contemporary Social Theory (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1940), 618.

2. Ogburn, "Cultural Lag as Theory," in Duncan, 87.


5. For the sake of completeness, we should note that perhaps the first American sociologist concerned with a cultural lag theory antedated this century. According to Luther and Jessie Bernard, in The Origins of American Sociology (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), 353, Lewis Masquerier's text Sociology (1877) contained the fundamentals of the cultural lag idea more than 50 years before Ogburn's version.

German sociology also foreshadowed the lag hypothesis (as well as the theory of historic cultural accumulation) in the early twentieth century. Howard Becker and Harry Elmer Barnes in Social Thought from Lore to Science 2nd ed., vol. 2, (Washington D. C.: Harran Press, 1952), 913, cited a 1908 work by Alfred Vierkandt in which the author "worked out a masterful theory of cultural continuity and cultural change. In fact, he anticipated virtually everything of importance to be found in Ogburn's Social Change (1922)..."


7. ibid.


10. ibid., 149.

11. ibid., 151.


15. ibid. It may be observed that, because of Veblen's concept of a primitive utopia, Ogburn was generally closer in spirit to Marx, the
prophet of modernity, than to Veblen, the "bard of savagery." Some of this difference was made up, however, by Ogburn's theory of "biological lag."


17. ibid., 18.

18. ibid.

19. ibid., 53.

20. ibid., 186.

21. ibid., 11.


Marxian scholar Eugene Kamenka summarizes the social tension just described in terms which are particularly relevant to Ogburn's lag hypothesis: "Productive forces develop steadily, incrementally, while relations of production are comparatively fixed at any given stage. This produces the possibility and reality of a growing time lag between the stage of development of productive forces and the relations of production or class structure of a given society." (ibid., 569-70; italics mine.)

24. ibid., 160.


26. ibid., 43.


28. ibid., 134.

29. White, 190.

30. ibid.

In his popular book, *The Mind in the Making* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1921), Robinson also implied that humanity's present beliefs and practices can -- and should -- be ranked according to age. Presumably, they would represent every epoch of history, from primitive to modern. Robinson arrived at a generalization as to the comparative antiquity of two main kinds of ideas: "In general, those ideas which are still almost universally accepted in regard to man's nature, his proper conduct, and his relations to God and his fellows are far more ancient and far less critical than those which have to do with the movement of the stars, the stratification of the rocks and the life of plants and animals." (ibid., 82) Robinson came close to the spirit of Ogburn's lag thesis, since he described unequal rates of change between the scientific and ethical realms.

32. James Harvey Robinson, "How Did We Get That Way?" *Harpers* 153 (August 1926), 272.

33. ibid., 271.


38. Robinson also announced that the highest goal of historical scholarship is to discover the "technique of progress." John Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983), 113. Yet, how could history best reveal this technique? Was this accomplished, asks John Higham, "by joining the social scientist in the positivist program of constructing general laws? Or by deriving criteria of progress in history from the values that are uppermost in the changing present? In effect, the formulators of the New History had recommended both without distinguishing between them; for they considered present-mindedness and science-mindedness as complementary." (ibid., 115-116; italics mine.)


41. ibid.

42. ibid., 30.


44. ibid., 378-379.


46. White, 181.

NOTES: CHAPTER SIX

1. When discussing "progress" in interwar social thought, one must inevitably deal with the common perception of this era as a time of intellectual "disillusionment." A historian of science, for example, writes that "the First World War and the subsequent dislocations of political and social life shook the belief that science (and rational thought in general) would lead to uninterrupted human progress, and the Depression raised the problem of technological unemployment. Things went so far that there were suggestions to declare a 'moratorium on inventions'." Joseph Ben-David, "Sociology of Science," International Social Science Journal 22:1 (1970): 7,8.

   It would be misleading, however, to apply this assessment to the social sciences. As Henry F. May has observed, social scientists in the 1920's were confident in their mission: "Sociologists of the period, full of the elan of their new subject...were as optimistic as the businessmen and the historians, though for different reasons. Their New Era lay in the future rather than the present; its motivating force was not technology alone but the guiding social intelligence." "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's" in Twentieth-Century America: Recent Interpretations eds. Barton J. Berstein and Allen J. Matusow (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), 137.


6. ibid., 31.


13. ibid.


16. ibid., 532.


18. Ellwood, 816.


22. ibid., 760.


As historian Edward Purcell points out, some social scientists "used objectivism to give authority to approaches they hoped would eventually contribute to meaningful political reform. Especially in the context of the twenties, objectivism was a useful bulwark for some against the political pressures of business dominated society." The Crisis of Democratic Theory (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1973), 27. By thus building an image of impartiality, social scientists could claim authority as expert consultants on social policy.

27. ibid., 304, 306.

28. ibid., 308.


According to Ross, the Enlightenment idea of directed social progress "served its adherents as an ideology -- a worldview which both reflected their place in society and skewed their understanding of the world to legitimate their desire for recognition and power." This ideology "allowed scientifically oriented intellectuals to claim a special authority and status in modern society. . . ."


33. ibid.


NOTES: CHAPTER SEVEN


5. Ogburn, "Technology and Governmental Change," in Duncan, 134.

6. ibid.


10. ibid., 72.

11. Ogburn, "Technology and Governmental Change," 139-140.

12. ibid., 140.

14. ibid., 44.

15. ibid., 51.

16. ibid., 54.


19. ibid., 57.


In regard to prediction, it is worth noting that Ogburn made some fairly accurate forecasts of the social effects of inventions. He predicted in 1938 that the increasing mechanization of farming would lead to "larger farms, a larger proportion of commercial farming, an excess of farmers and technological unemployment. Such a situation suggests governmental support or migration to cities, or both. These considerations lead us to expect a growth of the rural proletariat living a somewhat migratory life." (ibid., 6) Ogburn also foresaw that the expansion of the federal government and its partnership with business would not recede after the end of the New Deal, as it had done when America returned to "normalcy" in the 1920's. Ogburn, "Man and His Institutions," 29.


25. ibid., 69.


32. ibid., 268.

33. ibid., 270.

34. ibid.


37. Ogburn, "Technology as Environment" in Duncan, 79.

38. Much of this article is an elaboration of "Are Inventions Inevitable?" which originally set forth the list of 148 independent inventions. What was new, however, in the "Great Man" article was a summary of Kroeber's study of trends in women's dress fashions -- a study which, perhaps surprisingly, spoke to the issue of the relative influence of the individual in social change. As Ogburn observed, "the popular impression is that styles in women's wear are set arbitrarily by a few leading dressmakers. It would seem that here was a situation for relatively free will. The leader does as he wishes, and the people follow like so many sheep -- an extreme instance of the power of the great man. Ogburn, "The Great Man vs. Social Forces," in Duncan, 42.

To test this assumption, Kroeber took measurements of dress features from pictures of styles in women's evening dresses of the past 100 years. He then plotted his results on graph paper. "If the styles were arbitrary set" Ogburn reasoned, "we should expect no regular order to the plottings; the remarkable result, however, showed curves as smooth and regular, say, as the curves of business cycles, admittedly a product of social forces. Just what these social forces governing styles and fashion are, may not be known, but the leader certainly does not appear free to do just as he wishes." (ibid., 42)

39. ibid., 43.


42. Ogburn, "Man and His Institutions," 40.
43. Ogburn, "Technology and Governmental Change," 143.
44. ibid.
51. ibid., 72.

NOTES: CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Howard Becker, 102. In a later work, Becker reaffirmed his observation about "the material-nonmaterial distinction which Ogburn, more than any other sociologist, has given currency." Through Values to Social Interpretation (Durham: Duke University Press, 1950), 90. (Italics mine.)

Robert K. Merton also noted that, although the distinction between material and non-material culture had been "widely adopted" in sociology and anthropology, "the one sociological work which most systematically and consistently uses [these concepts] ... is Ogburn's Social Change." Robert K. Merton, "Civilization and Culture," S and SR 21:2 (November-December 1936): 103.


Charles A. Ellwood was a major champion of the social psychologists' understanding of "culture." Like Bernard and others, Ellwood implicitly criticized the material culture concept by taking into account ideas, language and communication. He argued that,
although "it is commonly supposed that tool making forms the beginning and, so to speak, the 'backbone' of cultural evolution," the real backbone of cultural change is concept making. "In other words, it is the diffusion of mental patterns by language thru [sic] the group, thereby making them social patterns, which forms culture." Charles A. Ellwood, Cultural Evolution (New York: The Century Co., 1927), 12.

According to Michael Choukas, in "The Concept of Cultural lag Re-Examined," ASR 1:5 (October 1936), 754, "the sociologist is not primarily interested in the knife, the table, the car, as material objects. These things have functions. . . . Primarily, therefore, the significance of the so-called material traits in a culture lies in their non-material aspects." The usual dichotomy of culture was inadequate because "the behavior of traits is . . . not inherently predetermined, but is socially conditioned by its associations with other parts of the culture." (ibid., 757) A knife, for example, can serve a food-getting, military, and ceremonial purpose, all within the same culture.

3. Merton, 104.


6. ibid., 20.


8. ibid., 89.

9. ibid., 96-97.


11. ibid.


13. ibid.

14. ibid.


19. ibid.


This critique is also found in Robert MacIver, Society (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937), 470. MacIver's idealistic viewpoint shows in his criticism of the normative technology assumption. Because "culture," in MacIver's definition of the term, is the "realm where final values reside," and has its own causal potency, "the goal is not the adaptation of culture [i.e., humanistic values] to civilization [i.e., technology and scientific knowledge] but rather the direction of civilization by culture." MacIver pointed out, further, that there is no a priori reason why "cultural lag" could not mean that technology is inadequately adapted to the requirements of culture.

Subjectivity in selection of the leading variable can also seen in illustrations of lag not involving technology. Wilson Wallis considered Ogburn's example involving local, municipal administration in building highways. Intercity construction encourages a shift toward centralization of these administrative responsibilities. But as long as local governments continue to handle highway construction within their jurisdictions, there will be confusion and cultural lag. In this example, the needs of the larger area, as opposed to the local community, are assumed to be the normative standard of comparison. If local rule was held to be the priority, Wallis argued, then the situation as regards lag would be quite different. Wilson D. Wallis, "The Concept of Lag," S and SR (May-June 1935): 403.

22. Mumford, 316.


28. ibid., 960.

29. ibid., 958.


31. ibid.

32. ibid.

33. ibid., 177.

34. ibid.

35. ibid.

36. ibid.

37. ibid., 176.

38. ibid., 177.


40. ibid., 889.

41. ibid.

42. ibid., 890.


NOTES: CHAPTER NINE

1. James H. S. Bossard, *Social Change and Social Problems*


6. ibid.


17. ibid., 581.

18. ibid.


20. ibid., 751.


According to Lynd, "as one begins to list the assumptions by which we Americans live, one runs at once into a large measure of contradiction and resulting ambivalence. This derives from the fact that these overlapping assumptions have developed in different eras and that they tend to be carried over uncritically into new situations or to be allowed to persist in long diminuendos into the changing future. Men's ideas, beliefs, and loyalties -- their non-material culture -- are frequently slower to be changed than are their material tools." (ibid.,

29. ibid.

30. Eubank, 370.


33. ibid., 452.


36. ibid., 441.

37. For instance, the first chapter of Barnes' *The American Way of Life* (1942) is entitled "Cultural Lag in the Twentieth Century: Institutional Windmills in an Age of Dynamos."


39. ibid., 56.

40. ibid., 58.

41. Floyd Allport, "The Group Fallacy in Relation to Social Science" *AJS* 29:6 (May 1924): 701.


43. ibid., 259.


45. ibid., 377.

46. ibid.

47. ibid.
48. George A. Lundberg, "Social Pathology and Sociometry"  
Sociometry 4:1 (February 1941): 85.

49. ibid., 93.

50. ibid., 94.

51. Franz Alexander, Our Age of Unreason 2nd ed.  

52. George Devereux, "Maladjustment and Social Neurosis,"  
ASR 4:6 (December 1939): 844-851.

  Devereux's other address on this subject was "Cultural Lag:  
A Social Neurosis and its Elimination," Lecture to Institute of General  
Semantics, Chicago, October, 1938. The Institute, in Englewood, New  
Jersey, reports that this paper is no longer available.

53. ibid.

54. Abbott Herman, "An Answer to Criticisms of the Lag  
Concept" AJS 43:3 (November 1937): 440.

55. ibid., 448.

56. ibid.

57. ibid., 325.

58. ibid., 326.

59. Schneider, 790.

60. James W. Woodward, "Critical Notes on the Nature of  
Sociology as a Science" SF 9:1 (October 1932): 32.

61. ibid., 32-33.

62. ibid., 31.

63. James W. Woodward, "Critical Notes on the Culture Lag  

64. ibid., 388.

65. ibid., 389.

66. Charles A. Beard, "Limitations to the Application of Social  
Science Implied in Recent Social Trends," SF 11:4 (May 1933), 510.
67. ibid.

68. Schneider, 791.


70. ibid., 222.


NOTES: CHAPTER TEN


6. ibid., 101-102.

7. William L. Chenery, "Invention Sets the Pace" Collier's 91 (February 4, 1933): 50.

8. ibid.


10. ibid.


12. ibid., 24.


17. ibid., 30.

18. ibid., 29.

19. ibid.


26. ibid.


35. Ogburn never did attempt to explain the relationship between these theories, and yet used them, in some cases, to account for the same social problems.


38. ibid., 15-16.

39. Like Havelock Ellis, other social thinkers during the interwar period implied that primitive culture is, as anthropologist Edward Sapir argued, "genuine," while modern civilization is artificial and "spurious." ("Culture, Genuine and Spurious," *AJS* 29:4 January 1924: 401-429.)

This theme also appeared in anthropologist Robert Lowie's provocatively-titled book, *Are We Civilized?*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929), 293. Lowie concluded that modern man's elaborate culture is incapable of meeting the needs which arise from his biological nature: "Man evolved in conditions that fitted him for membership in a small group. He has not changed biologically so as to fit into monster cities or commonwealths. Hence science, democracy, and religion jointly may palliate but cannot cure the ills of 'the great society.'" Because Lowie was always careful to distinguish man's cultural and biological natures (indeed, he influenced Ogburn in this regard), it is not surprising that he should affirm the basic assumptions of Ogburn's "biological lag."


42. Susman, 113.
NOTES: CHAPTER ELEVEN


3. After about 1935, the lag thesis no longer appears in AJS, ASR, or Social Forces, and is seen mainly in Sociology and Social Research, a less-prestigious journal. Also, in the late 1930's it was claimed that, even taking Ogburn's varied interests into account, "the contribution for which he is best known is probably his emphasis on quantitative method" -- not cultural lag. Howard Becker and Harry Elmer Barnes, eds., Social Thought From Lore to Science, vol. 2, second ed., (Washington D. C.: Harran Press, 1952), 983.


6. ibid., 10.


11. ibid., 12.


13. ibid., 391-392.


15. ibid.

17. ibid.


20. ibid., 380.


23. ibid., 274.


26. ibid.

27. ibid., 21.


Chase pointed out that "another curious paradox arising from the cultural lag is the ample financial support given by society to encourage more material inventions, and the meager support for the discovery of social inventions to offset them." (ibid., 118)


NOTES: CONCLUSION


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