

Aleš Hrdlička 1925–1926

Born on 29 March 1869 in the town of Humpolec in Bohemia, Aleš Hrdlička emigrated to New York with his family in 1881. Hrdlička's formal training was in medicine, but he developed an interest in the young science of physical anthropology while working at the New York Middletown State Homeopathic Hospital for the Insane. In 1896 he went to France to study anthropometrical methods with Léonce Manouvrier.

Manouvrier had inherited the mantle of French anthropology from Paul Broca, and he promoted a field that was more egalitarian and less quantitative than it had been in the 1860s. He distrusted statistics in anthropology as tools for hierarchical ranking (Hecht 1977). While much of Hrdlička's work on race does not hold up well in retrospect, it unequivocally breaks with the discredited polygenist "American school" of physical anthropology represented by Samuel George Morton, Josiah Nott, and George Gliddon in the mid-1800s. Hrdlička set out to pro-

professionalize physical anthropology and create a fundamental break with the past.

Hrdlička left medical practice in 1899 and worked on several anthropological projects under the aegis of the American Museum of Natural History and *Frederic Ward Putnam* of Harvard. In 1903 he was hired as an assistant curator by the Smithsonian Institution to found the Division of Physical Anthropology, which would be his base for the next 40 years.

In 1908 Hrdlička defined the scope of physical anthropology in the journal *Science*, identifying four main areas of inquiry for the emerging field. First, “the study of the normal white man living under average conditions . . . and the complete range of his variations.” Second, “the structure, function, and chemical composition—with their variations—in the primates.” Third, “development and variation in [human] structure . . . in relation to time.” And fourth, “the human races and their subdivisions.” This medical and typological orientation naturally reflected his training and interests.

Hrdlička’s greatest talent was organizational. Building the Smithsonian’s division into a world-class research facility in physical anthropology was but his first lasting contribution. Hrdlička also founded the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* in 1918 (which he edited until his death in 1943), and the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, whose first meeting was convened in 1930.

His principal area of interest was the peopling of the New World. Hrdlička was a staunch defender of the view that the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas are descended from Asians and came across the Bering Strait fairly recently. While this is a mundane theoretical stance today, at the time it stood in opposition to the views of Daniel G. Brinton, who saw indigenous Americans as descended from Europeans, and of others who held that the peopling of the New World occurred in the more remote past than the terminal Pleistocene. Hrdlička conducted extensive fieldwork in Asia, Russia, Canada, and Alaska, throughout his career and was ever vigilant in debunking the claim for early entry of people into the Americas.

The common morphology of the central incisors (“shovel-shaped”)

among Neanderthals, Asians, and Native Americans led Hrdlička to place Neanderthals in the direct ancestry of the human species, a position he argued in the 1927 Huxley Memorial Lecture, “The Neanderthal Phase of Man.” His significant full-length works include the manual *Anthropometry* (1920), and *The Skeletal Remains of Early Man* (1930). Somewhat paradoxically, his anthropometrical study published under the title *The Old Americans* is not about the indigenous inhabitants of the continent, but about the descendants of the first wave of European colonists.

Like many prominent scientists, Hrdlička was recruited by the American Eugenics Society, but unlike most, he expressed his displeasure early on at what it stood for. When the society promoted Nordic superiority, Hrdlička wrote to its president to complain as both a physical anthropologist and a proud Bohemian:

I have only one country and that is the United States, though I am justly proud of Bohemia the country of my birth. But I know personally and quite well most of the peoples of Europe; I also know a good deal of their anthropological as well as their other history; and while I know well that some of these people are much poorer or much less educated than others, and while I cannot help but like some more than others, yet I am wholly unable to say that any one group has superior or inferior endowments mentally or even physically. Nor do I know of as yet any tests in ‘psychology’ that would show us, outside of pathological defects, more than superficialities that can be given but little weight in matters of this importance (Hrdlička to Irving Fisher, 27 November 1923, NAA).

Like many of his contemporaries, however, he believed that the structure of the brain might hold information relevant to understanding the behavioral differences among different cultures and races. Accordingly, in addition to skeletons he began to amass a collection of brains (Hrdlička, 1916), and nearly a century later it became newsworthy that he had ended up with the brain of Ishi, “the last wild Indian of California” (Kroeber 1961; Bower 2000) and Qisuk, a “New York Eskimo” (Hrdlička 1901; Harper 2000)

Hrdlička regarded the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* almost literally as his baby. He saw little value in statistical analysis, experimental research, or genetics, a stance that younger colleagues found frustrating. "Statistics," he said at a meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, "will be the ruination of the science." His own methods were entirely descriptive, leading Ashley Montagu to characterize him as a scientific product of the 19th rather than the 20th century. He was also known as something of a misogynist and a prude, avowing that women have no place in science, and walking out of a paper on primate sex after declaring it an improper subject.

Hrdlička was supportive of his juniors, however, and he was widely acknowledged to be a generous and endearing man in private life. Believing that a medical education was vital to a physical anthropologist, he encouraged and even financed the medical education of some of his protégés. He was married twice, but had no children. He died on 5 September 1943 at the age of 74.

JONATHAN MARKS

Harry Shapiro

1948

Harry Lionel Shapiro was born on 19 March 1902 to a family of first-generation immigrant Polish Jews in Boston. He was the second of three sons. From a job peddling in the Lower East Side of New York City, his father had developed a successful business and moved to Boston before the children were born. Harry competed for and won a place in the prestigious Boston Latin School and was subsequently admitted to Harvard University, where he matriculated in 1919.

Shapiro was unsure of his choice of major until he took a class from Earnest Hooton, who inspired him to study physical anthropology seriously. Graduating magna cum laude in 1923, Shapiro remained at Harvard to become the first in a long line of Hooton's doctoral students in anthropology, in preparation for his doctoral research Shapiro also studied for a year at the Bussey Institute for Applied Biology at Harvard, working in statistics and human genetics. His doctoral thesis

was on "race mixture," a subject he would continue to pursue throughout his career. The dissertation focused on the Polynesian-English population descended from the mutineers on the Bounty, after they had been transplanted from Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island. Shapiro found that "race mixture" did *not* lead to degeneration, either physically or culturally, but rather to what he called "hybrid vigor." This study contrasted markedly from the only prior such study, on a colored-white community in South Africa, by the German geneticist and anthropologist Eugen Fischer.

Upon receiving his doctorate in 1926, Shapiro accepted an assistant curatorship at the American Museum of Natural History, where he remained for the rest of his career. He succeeded Clark Wissler as chair of the anthropology department in 1942, a post he held until his retirement in 1970.

Shapiro's work on "race mixture" permitted him to straddle the increasingly wide gap between the physical anthropology of his training with Hooton and the Boasian anthropology being taught in New York. In 1929 Charles Davenport and Morris Steggerda published *Race Crossing in Jamaica*, which argued along the lines of Eugen Fischer that interbreeding was harmful to human populations. Shapiro returned to the population of his doctoral project and published *The Heritage of the Bounty* in 1936, arguing in contrast that not only was "race crossing" not biologically harmful, but that it had been a positive cultural stimulus in the development of civilization.

His address on anthropology's contribution to interracial understanding, published in *Science* in 1944, derives its central arguments from Franz Boas's *The Mind of Primitive Man*, and cites no other source either in physical or cultural anthropology.

What is possibly Shapiro's most enduring work, that of immigrant studies and the developmental plasticity of the human body, lies within a field first plowed by Boas. Assisted by Frederick Hulse, Shapiro studied Japanese immigrants to Hawaii and contrasted them with their relatives who remained in Japan (sedentes) and their offspring born in Hawaii. The physical differences between the sedentes and immigrants replicated the results of Boas on the effect within a single generation of

immigration upon the bodies of Italians and Jews. The same pattern of differences between the immigrants and their own children showed that the trend was real and multigenerational, and therefore not transient (or perhaps to be followed by a reversion to a racial norm).

Forensic anthropology was another of Shapiro's interests, and during World War II he worked on identifying the bodies of dead soldiers. After the war Shapiro grew into the role of a public anthropologist, writing many articles for mass consumption in *Natural History*, the magazine of the American Museum of Natural History. His popular book *Peking Man* also contributed to public anthropology, bringing together paleoanthropological insights and a lifetime of acquaintance with the material and its principal students.

Although bearing an obviously Jewish name, Shapiro moved freely in presumptively Gentile circles. After the American Eugenics Society was "reformed" by Frederick Osborn, Shapiro served as its president from 1955 to 1962; before its reformation, when much of its effort was devoted to promoting xenophobic legislation, its supporters had included Shapiro's advisor Hooton and his supervisor at the American Museum, Clark Wissler. Although much of his professional output was devoted to the "mixed race" populations of Polynesia, Shapiro also researched and wrote a monograph on his own ancestry, published by UNESCO in 1960 as *The Jewish People: A Biological History*.

Although known as a helpful colleague to his peers, Shapiro had a more ambivalently exploitative attitude toward his juniors. Neither William Lessa nor Frederick Hulse had been permitted to use in their own doctoral theses the data on Asian migrants they collected for Shapiro. Shapiro published on the data Hulse collected in *Migration and Environment*, but he never published on the data Lessa collected (Lasker 1999). Nor did he welcome *Sherwood Washburn*, a new Ph.D. teaching at Columbia Medical School, into his anthropological circle (Washburn, personal communication). In person, however, Shapiro affected a genteel and cordial air. He was an accomplished cellist and skilled gardener, and he was rarely seen without his pipe. Shapiro and his wife, Janice, had three sons during their 24-year marriage, which ended with her death in 1962. In addition to their home on the Upper East Side of

New York City the Shapiros had a home and gardens in upstate New York that Harry helped to build.

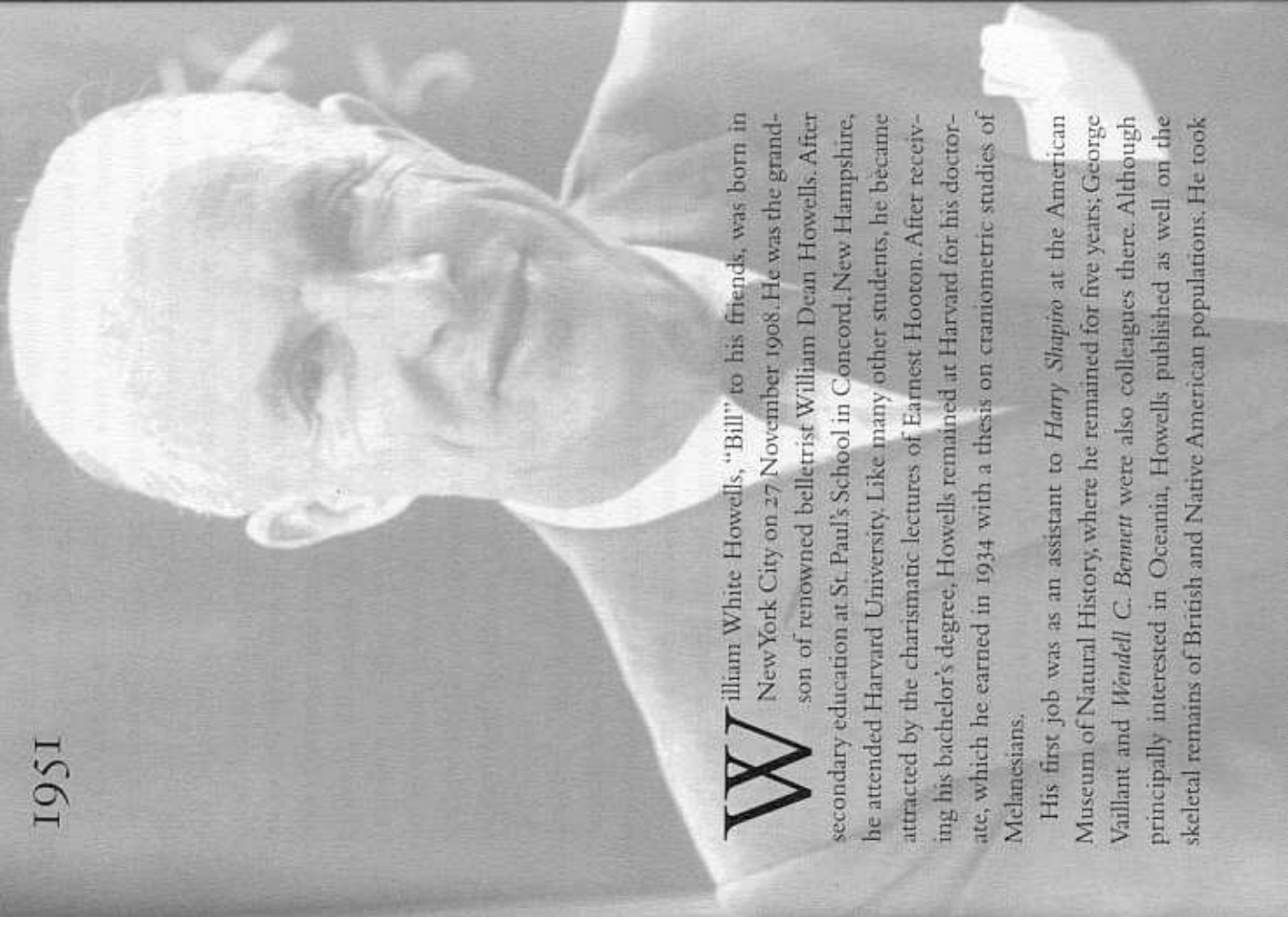
Elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1949, Shapiro served on many committees for the academy and the National Research Council. The Theodore Roosevelt Distinguished Service Medal was bestowed on him in 1964, and he was subsequently honored by the New York Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. In addition to serving as president of the American Anthropological Association, he was president of the American Ethnological Society in 1942-43.

Shapiro died in New York City on 7 January 1990.

JONATHAN MARKS

William W. Howells

1951



William White Howells, "Bill" to his friends, was born in New York City on 27 November 1908. He was the grandson of renowned belletrist William Dean Howells. After secondary education at St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, he attended Harvard University. Like many other students, he became attracted by the charismatic lectures of Earnest Hooton. After receiving his bachelor's degree, Howells remained at Harvard for his doctorate, which he earned in 1934 with a thesis on craniometric studies of Melanesians.

His first job was as an assistant to *Harry Shapiro* at the American Museum of Natural History, where he remained for five years; *George Vaillant* and *Wendell C. Bennett* were also colleagues there. Although principally interested in Oceania, Howells published as well on the skeletal remains of British and Native American populations. He took

a faculty post at the University of Wisconsin in 1939, where he remained until 1954 except for the war years. During that period he served as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy, holding the rank of lieutenant (j.g.). He was made an associate professor in 1946, and a professor in 1948; he chaired the department in 1953. That year he also helped to revive publication of *Human Biology*.

Howells matured in an intellectual generation of "generalist" anthropologists, but he surpassed most of his contemporaries in the breadth and scope of his writings. During the years he spent at the University of Wisconsin he published a triad of widely read and respected books, on human evolution (*Mankind So Far*, 1944), religion (*The Heathens*, 1948), and archaeology (*Back of History*, 1954); Howells was a meticulous and lucid writer. While at Wisconsin he served as treasurer of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA), editor of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, and president of the American Anthropological Association (AAA).

Upon Hooton's death in 1954 Howells succeeded him at Harvard. Lasker (1999:53–54) suggests that he always intended to return East, as he had neither bought a house nor engaged a dentist in Wisconsin, and as he had kept a great deal of furniture in storage over his midwestern sojourn. At Harvard his major output focused almost exclusively on the relationships among human populations, both past and present, that were discernible in the similarities of their skull patterns. Although Howells has retained a global interest, his primary geographical area has been Asia and Oceania. In the field of paleoanthropology, Howells used multivariate statistics to contrast the "Neanderthal phase" (later, "Candelabra") model of human origins with the "Noah's ark" theory. The Candelabra model emphasizes geographical continuity through deep time in human evolution, following the work of Franz Weidenreich; the Noah's ark model emphasizes migration and large-scale replacement of populations. More recently these have been recast as the "multiregional" and "out-of-Africa" models.

Like Hooton, Howells became one of the most well-known and popular professors at Harvard. One of his undergraduate advisees, science-fiction mogul Michael Crichton, recalled:

As a lecturer—which was the way most undergraduates experienced him—Howells was extraordinary. The famous lecturers at Harvard . . . were all men who spoke well, moved well, and lectured with conviction and insight. They shared a common element of showmanship, and they conveyed a contagious enthusiasm for their field of study.

Even among this group, Howells was exceptional. His style was disarming: he lectured quietly, in a relaxed conversational manner, with occasional long pauses to look at his notes. The effect was one of complete spontaneity. . . . One never knew whether Howells was going to lecture for an hour behind the podium, or whether he was going to say five words and then run a film, or whether he would talk with slides, or what. He kept his audiences off balance, and they adored him. (in Giles et al. 1976:xxii–xxiii)

Crichton also noted that Howells "was a gifted performer, and his imitations of primate gaits were justly famous. But those imitations, like the jokes and puns and anecdotes and newspaper stories sprinkled through his lectures, all made a certain points and were all the more appreciated" (in Giles et al. 1976:xxiii).

Each of Hooton's students went in different directions from their mentor, with Carleton Coon and Howells remaining closest to the craniological methodological tradition that characterized so much of physical anthropology during the early decades of the 20th century. Even so, Howells introduced new levels of statistical rigor to the study of human skulls, specifically multivariate morphometric techniques, and he has generally interpreted his results from the more modern standpoint of patterns of similarity and difference among local populations than from the standpoint of essentialized global "races." Not only does Howells's work show skull variation to be principally local, but it also shows all modern populations to be very similar to one another craniometrically. In his own words, "attempts to fit even fairly recent prehistoric specimens into such a matrix were typically unsuccessful." And his data failed to support models of multiregionalism or regional

continuity: "Neanderthal and earlier crania were far outside a modern range, with no credible relation to existing populations" (Howells 1992:3).

Howells was awarded the Viking Fund Medal in 1954 and the Distinguished Service Award from the AAA in 1978. He received a special Broca centennial prize from the Société d'Anthropologie in 1980, and the Charles Darwin Lifetime Achievement Award from the AAPA upon the institution of that award in 1992. Howells retired from Harvard in 1974, but he has remained active and productive, publishing the monograph *Skull Shapes and the Map* in 1989 and the textbook *Getting Here* in 1993. He has been married since 1929 to Muriel Gurdon Seabury and has two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

JONATHAN MARKS

Sherwood Washburn

1962

Sherwood "Sherry" Washburn was born to privilege in Massachusetts in 1911, and as a young man he spent time during the summers at the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) in Cambridge. He attended Harvard University and became inspired by the courses given by *Alfred M. Tozzer* and *Earnest Hooton*. Upon graduation in 1935 he stayed on to do graduate work in physical anthropology under Hooton. While Hooton focused on human variation, Washburn was more interested in primate evolution and spent much of his time at the MCZ.

As a graduate student, Washburn participated in the Asiatic Primate Expedition to Thailand led by *Harold Coolidge*, *C. R. Carpenter*, and *Adolph Schultz*, and came to recognize the importance of nonhuman primate biology for a comprehensive understanding of human behav-

ior in an evolutionary framework. He completed his doctorate in 1940 on langur and macaque skeletal material, shortly after being appointed to the anatomy faculty at Columbia University Medical School. The anthropological relevance of Washburn's experimental research on the growth of the skull in rats, however, was incomprehensible to the senior physical anthropologists in New York, such as *Harry Shapiro* and *Franz Weidenreich*. Washburn made what contacts he could in anthropology, but also made significant connections to the biologists at the American Museum of Natural History who were formalizing the "Synthetic Theory" of evolution. Washburn would later champion the idea of an intimate biological history and recent separation of humans and African apes, which had been the pet theory of paleontologist *William King Gregory*.

Washburn remained involved in anthropology through seminars sponsored by the Viking Fund in New York. In 1947 he moved to the University of Chicago on the promise of a joint appointment in anthropology and anatomy. At the last moment the anatomy department reneged on the offer, but through the intervention of *Robert Redfield* the anthropology department was able to pick up his full appointment; *Redfield* and *Sol Tax* were both strongly interested in bringing Washburn to Chicago. By moving to Chicago Washburn regained the holistic perspective of his anthropological training and had the opportunity, in turn, to train a number of graduate students, but because he no longer had the medical facilities to do experimental work on skulls, his primary research interests began to shift to primate behavior and its role in illuminating aspects of human evolution.

It was at about this time that Washburn crystallized a plan for the reformation of physical anthropology to bring it into harmony with contemporary developments in evolutionary biology. With the distinguished geneticist *Theodosius Dobzhansky*, he organized a Cold Spring Harbor symposium in 1950 that attempted to refocus the field around real populations instead of Platonic racial types. The following year he published his most famous and influential paper, "The New Physical Anthropology," in which he argued for the replacement of the static typological approach to human variation by a dynamic, evolutionary,

adaptive approach; in 1952 he presented these ideas in the *Wenner-Gren "Anthropology Today"* symposium.

Washburn's first generation of students at Chicago included *Irven DeVore*, *Phyllis Dolhinow*, *James Gavan*, and *Clark Howell*. In 1957, while a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Washburn was recruited by the University of California at Berkeley to expand its biological anthropology program. Over the next two decades, until his retirement in 1978, he would build Berkeley's program into the premier biological anthropology training ground in the country.

Like his Harvard mentor *Earnest Hooton*, Washburn became a charismatic and inspiring teacher, whose introductory class might attract a thousand students in a given semester. His influence came through his teaching, his vision for the field, and also his organizational skills. Following the landmark Cold Spring Harbor Symposium, Washburn organized two major international conferences with the assistance of the Viking Fund: "The Social Life of Early Man," the proceedings of which were published in 1961, and "Classification and Human Evolution," (1963).

Under the postwar humanistic aegis of UNESCO, Washburn promoted the vision of a unified species that was evolving under the leadership of "Man the Hunter." A sponsor of many women students, Washburn would see that idea augmented by them in the 1960s and 1970s, as gender roles, which had been taken for granted as part of nature, became more keenly questioned (*Haraway 1988*).

Of all his works, Washburn was proudest of the published version of his American Anthropological Association presidential address, which appeared in 1963 as "The Study of Race." The address was written at the behest of *Joseph B. Casagrande* and the AAA executive committee, which was trying to cope with the scandal aroused by *Carleton Coon's The Origin of Races*, a book that was being invoked by segregationists for its argument that blacks had evolved into *Homo sapiens* 200,000 years later than whites. Washburn, who had once been a teaching assistant for Coon at Harvard, dismissed his former mentor's work as the last vestige of an archaic paradigm and repudiated the political evils for

which it was being utilized. Washburn maintained that the published version of his speech was virtually identical to the podium presentation, but an oral lore has the podium version being more strident and more damning. His own recollection, obviously melodramatic, has it that silence followed the talk until his friend, the geneticist Dobzhansky, leaped up to congratulate him, and thunderous applause ensued.

Washburn's honors and awards were legion. The Viking Fund Medal was presented to him in 1960; the Huxley Medal in 1967, the Distinguished Service Award of the AAA in 1983, and the Charles Darwin Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Association of Physical Anthropologists.

He died in Berkeley, California, on 16 April 2000.

JOANATHAN MARKS

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