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PATTERNS OF AN AGE: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WRITINGS OF  
THEODORA M. ABEL

*The Fielding Institute*

PH.D.

1980

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1980

PATTERNS OF AN AGE:  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WRITINGS OF THEODORA M. ABEL

A dissertation submitted

by

J. LeRoy Gabaldon

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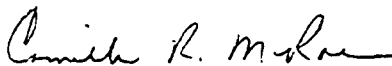
THE FIELDING INSTITUTE


in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of


Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology


with an emphasis in Clinical Psychology

This dissertation has been  
accepted for the faculty of  
The Fielding Institute by:

  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
 Chapter	
I.    FORMATIVE YEARS: THE BEGINNING OF A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST .....	14
II.   TWO DISCIPLINES: THE INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY .....	36
III.  PROFESSIONAL CHOICE: TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE .....	65
IV.   CUMULATIVE EFFORTS: INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON TESTING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY .....	94
V.   "THE METHODS BEST CALCULATED": THEODORA M. ABEL'S ART OF RESEARCH .....	110
 APPENDIX	
A.   The Public Lectures of Theodora M. Abel .....	123
B.   Number of Publications and Lectures by Year ...	131
C.   Journals Where Published Materials are Located.	133
D.   Chronological Chart of Important Dates .....	134
 THE PUBLISHED WRITINGS OF THEODORA M. ABEL	
A.   Journal Articles and Book Chapters .....	139
B.   Books .....	150
C.   Reviews .....	151
D.   Recorded Meetings of Psychological Associations	152
 SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	 153

## PREFACE

The idea for this study grew out of my response to a 1978 seminar conducted by Dr. Theodora M. Abel on the usage of the Rorschach technique. Dr. Abel's obvious expertise in the use of this procedure quickly became of secondary interest to me once I came to appreciate her influential role in the shaping of the history of modern psychology. I have used Dr. Abel's professional career as a psychologist as a vehicle to witness the trends that developed within the discipline of psychology since the mid-1920s.

This dissertation appears in a somewhat different form than was originally intended. The original plan for this dissertation was a definitive biographical statement on Dr. Theodora M. Abel. However, I soon found myself overwhelmed with information. At that point, I decided to focus on one aspect of her career, her published writings. While this narrowing of my topic was done at the sacrifice of completely portraying Dr. Abel's warmth as a professional and as a human being, the advantage was a more manageable approach.

I initially performed a content analysis of each of

Abel's published works. After consecutively numbering these articles, I posed five questions for each of Dr. Abel's studies. (1) What is the purpose of this study? (2) To whom is the study addressed? (3) What methodology is employed in the study? (4) What is the outcome of the study? (5) What is the conclusion of the study? After making this content analysis, I looked for common themes in her material. For example, I found that culture studies prevailed throughout her publications. Other common themes included perception and thinking, mental retardation, psychiatric aspects of disability, psychoanalysis and family therapy. After completing the content analysis, I related Dr. Abel's work to historically representative psychological literature beginning with the mid-1920s.

In January, 1979, I began to hold interviews on a regular basis with Dr. Abel. I conducted sessions once a month for a year, beginning with an unstructured approach. These meetings were taped, but not transcribed. As the focus of the study emerged, the interviews took on a more structured nature and ultimately exhibited a definite format. In my analysis of Abel's publications, the interviews served the useful purpose of revealing the sources of her interests in the various avenues of psychological exploration available. With the parameters of the dissertation being limited to her published work, the

questions asked dealt with specific writings or certain biographical circumstances that led to her professional investigations and transitions within psychology. Published statements which discussed Dr. Abel's work were used for evaluative purposes. Since the dissertation was limited to consideration of Dr. Abel's published writings as a means of viewing the history of modern psychology, the reactions of other individuals in Abel's professional or personal life were not included. No interviews were conducted with family, friends or other professionals within the discipline of psychology. Again, this resulted in a sacrifice for the sake of manageability.

I did not adhere to a strict chronological presentation of Dr. Abel's published works. Rather, I chose to present her works by topic and by her transitions within the discipline of psychology. Historical reference is not tied to one event; instead a multitude of factors interact to determine an individual's choice of subject matter. Therefore, it was sometimes necessary to go back in time to trace the development of her ideas. Dr. Abel's willing involvement in some of the major trends available within this discipline reflects a participating individual's published reaction to these trends.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My chief debt is to Dr. Theodora M. Abel who willingly provided time for interviews and access to drafts of her written material. Dr. Abel not only has provided me with a wealth of information, but she serves as a model for my future endeavors. I am grateful for the support provided by the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Camille McRae, Dr. John Gladfelter, Ms. Mary Ann Read, Mr. William Irvin, Mr. Hallock Hoffman, Dr. Renata Tesch and, my External Examiner, Dr. Bernard Riess. Special appreciation is extended to Dr. McRae for her invaluable assistance and support which encouraged me to continue when there seemed no hope, to Dr. Stan Caplan who introduced me to the discipline of psychology, and to my coeval Dr. Ann Frank. The cooperation and assistance I received from Dr. Richard B. Wilson can never be repaid. He consistently provided intellectual stimulus during the entire process of the dissertation. I want to also thank Ms. Corinne Parisi for her intelligent and painstaking editorial assistance. Special acknowledgement is extended to my parents, Joe and Molly Gabaldon who have never failed to show interest in their

son. Above all, to Ms. Karen M. Lemmer who displayed  
patience and faith when I had neither.

## ABSTRACT

### PATTERNS OF AN AGE:

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WRITINGS OF THEODORA M. ABEL

by

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M.A. University of New Mexico, Counseling, 1976  
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In order to construct a more complete picture of the history of psychology it is important to examine the response of one particular psychologist to the dominant trends within the field. The works of Dr. Theodora M. Abel were examined and related to experimental, applied and clinical psychology.

Dr. Abel's interest in psychology began through her contact with the experimental methods as taught by Margaret Washburn. Dr. Abel's studies at the University of Paris and Columbia University in the early 1920s solidified her commitment to the value of psychological investigation. Abel's utilization of interdisciplinary techniques to enhance the discipline of psychology was rooted in this phase of her career. The major psychologies of the mid-1920s (Gestalt, Behaviorism and Psychoanalysis)

were mirrored in her published reactions to these movements.

Dr. Abel's transition from experimental psychology to applied psychology was witnessed through her published work in cultural psychology and anthropology. Abel's expertise in the usage of projective techniques enabled her to examine and to report on distinctions within a variety of cultures and the distinctions between those cultures. Dr. Abel demonstrated that psychology and anthropology could reciprocally benefit each other when their methodologies were combined.

Dr. Abel's transition to clinical psychology from applied psychology reflected a major trend evident within the field of psychology in the late 1940s. Abel's publications in clinical psychology, which revealed her involvement with both psychoanalysis and family therapy, continued to examine forms of cultural diversity. Abel's skill as a clinician permitted her to begin her work as a teacher of these methods.

Dr. Abel's publications throughout the 1950s and 1960s continued to exemplify her long-standing commitment to psychology. Abel's dedication to her chosen profession was seen in two cumulative publications that demonstrated the refinement of her ideas on testing in cultural contexts and the influence of culture on psychotherapy. Abel's contributions to psychoanalysis and family therapy enabled

her to publish authoritatively in ways which won her international recognition.

Dr. Abel's artistry as a clinician and teacher was evaluated to portray her achievements in psychology. Her interdisciplinary methodological approach transcended the limitations of strictly psychological investigation. Abel's career as a psychologist may serve as a model for other professionals regardless of their specialty.

The investigation of one psychologist's reaction to the available approaches within psychology provides an additional viewpoint on the development of the discipline as a whole.

History, if viewed as a repository for more than anecdote or chronology, could produce a decisive transformation in the image of science by which we are now possessed.  
--Thomas S. Kuhn. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

## Introduction

This study is an attempt to examine historical developments within psychology, in the United States, by utilizing the published material of a prominent member of this group. The published writings of Dr. Theodora M. Abel will illustrate the various threads that have emerged within psychological thought since the mid-1920s and will function as an avenue to investigate the intellectual climate of the times. Her writings will allow us to visualize the evolving concerns of psychology and the reciprocal influences of a determining culture and an individual's creativity.

This examination permits not only a view of a thread in the fabric of psychology, but it permits an opportunity to witness various crossovers of other scientific disciplines through professional testimony. Specific orientations of published expression cannot be viewed in isolation from cultural circumstances; rather, these cultural circumstances will reveal their dynamic interaction. What will be shown is that Dr. Abel's writings are expressions in response to the professional culture of psychology and related disciplines; these re-

sponses are guided by her particular interests within psychology. The historical circumstances examined will, however, be only those in which her published expressions are rooted. This approach is not intended to minimize the movements of psychology at the time. The fundamental concern here is to articulate the connections between her contributions and the larger body of psychology and to focus only on those aspects of psychology which enter visibly into her published work.

The major transitions that she made in the course of her career (experimental to applied to clinical psychology) reflect dominant developments in the discipline of psychology. Through the examination of her writings, her approaches to psychology will be shown. In the variety of her professional orientations, Dr. Abel functioned, not as a psychologist isolated within her own science, but as a scientist utilizing the tools of other disciplines to enhance her psychological findings. The hypotheses and conclusions that were offered as a result of her investigations either validated the conclusions of other scientists or were synthetic advances in the science of psychology.

While this study is not intended to be a definitive biographical statement, certain anecdotal material will be included that will complement her specific orientations within psychology as they emerge from her writings. This

study is not a typical psychobiographical document that investigates factors in the psyche, the events of childhood or the dynamics of family life that shaped adulthood dynamics. Through the representation of Dr. Abel's published writings, a clearer understanding of some of the approaches within psychology will be offered.

Theodora Mead was born in Newport, Rhode Island, on September 9, 1899, when her mother was attending the wedding of one of her friends.<sup>1</sup> Two weeks after her birth, her parents went back to New York City and lived at 11 West 11th Street. Her father became a lawyer after a brief career in banking and provided the necessary financial security for the family. Her mother was schooled in New York City and spent two years in Europe before her marriage. Theodora was the only child born to Elsie and Robert Mead, Jr.

The dynamic force in the family appears to have been Abel's mother, Elsie. Elsie was a great organizer. During the last year of World War I, she was in charge of 3000 YMCA women in Paris and received a decoration from the French government for her efforts. She helped organize, along with her father, Clement Cleveland, M.D., the American Cancer Society and succeeded, within the first few years of the Society, in raising one million dollars. Elsie also assisted in raising \$100,000 to buy one gram of



radium to be presented to Mme. Curie by President Harding at the White House. This activity led to a friendship with Mme. Curie whom Dr. Abel visited weekly while attending the University of Paris.

Theodora Abel was educated in various private schools until she started at the Chapin School, in New York City, in the fourth grade and graduated from there in 1917. In March, 1911, she accompanied her mother to Europe (only one of frequent childhood European travels) and completed the sixth grade in Geneva. Throughout her schooling at Chapin, Abel studied languages: German, Latin and Greek. She had already become proficient in the reading and writing of French and Italian through the teachings of her nurse. Concurrent with her language interest, Abel had been taking violin lessons and practiced each day. This musical interest started at eight years of age; her dedication to playing the violin continues to this day. Because of an opportunity to play with a professional quartet, she terminated her graduate studies at Columbia University two weeks into the first semester. This was the only occasion when she waived from her interest in psychology, an interest which began during her undergraduate years at Vassar.

In the summer of 1921, Abel accompanied her mother to Poland, since the Polish had wished to begin a YMCA-like program with the assistance of Theodora Abel's

mother. At Baranowicze (now part of Russia) she met a Polish YMCA worker, Theodore Abel, who was to become her husband in November, 1923. They were to become fellow graduate students at Columbia University, she in psychology and he in sociology. He taught at Columbia for twenty years before heading the sociology department at Hunter College, which he chaired for sixteen years before he retired. Theodore Abel is an established sociologist who has published extensively and is currently a scholar in residence in the sociology department at the University of New Mexico.

Dr. Theodora M. Abel's first interest in psychology, specifically in the experimental method, was due to the influence of Margaret Floy Washburn while Abel studied at Vassar. Her introduction to this method was a collaborative study on the effects of music. Ms. Washburn was instrumental in Abel's securing a graduate place at Columbia University. Abel's studies at Columbia further exposed her to the interdisciplinary approach to psychology promulgated by Robert Sessions Woodworth. The effect of this interdisciplinary vein of psychology on Abel can be witnessed in the variety of her psychological interest and published expression. Abel spent one year in Europe where she studied under Pierre Janet, Henri Pieron and Théophile Simon, among others. She received a Diploma in Psychology from the University of

Paris in 1923. After Abel received her doctoral degree in experimental psychology from Columbia in 1925, Ms. Washburn assisted Abel in securing a teaching position at the University of Illinois. It was here that Abel met Madison Bentley who influenced her to publish. These three psychologists, Washburn, Woodworth and Bentley, are her professional models in the science of psychology.

Abel's transition from experimental to applied psychology, her first of two within the field of psychology, began in 1936 with her studies of adolescents. She became Director of Research at the Manhattan Trade School for Girls and, later, Senior Psychologist at Letchworth Village. Numerous publications resulted from her interest in the thinking processes of these students and patients. Her husband introduced her to Zygmunt Piotrowski, who had recently left the same region of Poland where Theodore had been reared. Piotrowski had been a protégé of Herman Rorschach, and he introduced Theodora Abel to the Rorschach method. Through Piotrowski's teaching and private studies with Dr. Bruno Klopfer, Dr. Abel became an expert in the use of the Rorschach. Her expertise in this method was publicly acknowledged through election to the presidency of the Society of Projective Techniques from 1947 to 1949.

Theodora Mead Abel and Margaret Mead first met when they were seated next to each other in a class at Vassar. Abel's long-standing professional and personal friend-

ship with Mead is evident in Abel's many and varied studies on culture, in their collaborative work in the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures project and in Mead's own statement in the preface to Culture and Psychotherapy.<sup>2</sup> Abel's contribution to the discipline of anthropology was recognized, and she was elected Fellow to the American Anthropological Association in 1975.

Dr. Abel's second transition occurred in 1947 when she became Psychologist and then Director of Psychology at the Postgraduate Center for Psychotherapy (later renamed, Postgraduate Center for Mental Health), in New York City. Abel received psychoanalytic training and supervision and was later to become a lay training analyst; she was also instrumental in incorporating a family therapy training program at the Center. Along with her numerous publications, teaching and private practice, Dr. Abel held elected positions in many professional associations.<sup>3</sup>

In 1971, Dr. Abel retired from the Center, terminated her private practice in New York and, with her husband, relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico. In Albuquerque, Abel began a private practice, became associated with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of New Mexico Medical School and became Chief of the Family Therapy Program at the Child Guidance Center. In 1972,

she returned to New York where she was honored as Psychologist of the Year by the New York Society of Clinical Psychologists. Her varied publications of psychological interest continue along with her teaching of the various methods of inquiry within psychology.

In the following paragraphs, the reader is informed of how the connections between biographical circumstances and professional publications will be dealt with in the chapters of the dissertation. Chapter One is an introduction to Dr. Abel's professional involvement with the experimental method in psychology and reveals the influence of the laboratory method of the University of Paris and the interdisciplinary technique of Columbia's psychology department on her work. This chapter demonstrates the connections between her published expressions and psychology by viewing the movements within psychology of the times.

By giving a brief historical setting of anthropology in Chapter Two, the milieu is set to view her published work in cultural psychology and anthropology. Her transition from experimental to applied psychology and her knowledge of projective techniques is examined through her publications which illuminate the range of her psychological interests and the application of her findings.

Chapter Three examines her transition from applied to clinical psychology and traces, through her published

work, her development as a clinician and teacher. Her involvement in psychoanalysis and, later, in family therapy, reflects not only a personal transition but also the general proclivity of psychology at the time. Her writings reflect a continued interest in studying the diversity of culture (as seen in Chapter Two of this study) and the application of cultural diversity within clinical psychology.

In these three first chapters, Dr. Abel is revealed as a representative member of psychology who made transitions within its various fields. Through the examination of her published contributions to psychology and related disciplines, connections are made to the intellectual culture and this examination demonstrates the values as determined by this particular culture.

In Chapter Four, her published writings are seen in their panoramic and integrative mode. Dr. Abel's continued interest in the application of clinical psychology, within the varieties of cultural expression, is examined. She viewed her retirement as an opportunity to continue her teaching through culminating publications on psychoanalysis and family therapy. The retirement years have offered her the freedom to reflect upon and to refine previous conclusions.

Chapter Five concludes the study by evaluating the significance of her achievements. Dr. Abel adopted an ex-

emplary professional stance by having transcended disciplinary limitations as well as the exclusiveness of too strictly defined approaches. Her own recent statements concerning the future of psychology are examined through her published expression. These statements authenticate a strain which pervades her endeavors throughout her entire career: her continued involvement with specific problems and her acknowledgement of the significance of methods for the entire profession.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Theodora M. Abel, 11 April 1979. A well-written summary of Drs. Theodore and Theodora Abel's relationship can be found in the Albuquerque Journal, 23 March 1978, Sec., B, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Rhoda Métraux, Culture and Psychotherapy (New Haven: College and University Press, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Abel's involvement in professional organizations is extensive. The following lists the status, organization and, if applicable, elected position. Fellow, American Psychological Association; Fellow, American Ortho-Psychiatric Association (Vice-President, 1956-1957); Fellow, Society of Projective Techniques (President, 1947-49); Member, Eastern Psychological Association (Secretary, 1940-44); Member, American Group Psychotherapy Association; Fellow, American Anthropological Association; Member, American Psychopathological Association (Vice-President, 1958-59); Member, New York State Psychological Association; Fellow Council of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists; Member, New York Society of Clinical Psychologists (President, 1965); Member, New



Mexico Psychological Association; Member, New Mexico  
Group Psychotherapy Association; Member, Southwestern  
Group Psychotherapy Association; Fellow, American  
Association for the Advancement of Science.

Biography is not about a man's life;  
it is the simulation of that life in  
words.

--Paul Kendal, The Art of Biography

Why should we look to the past to pre-  
pare for the future? Because there is  
nowhere else to look. The real ques-  
tion is whether the past contains clues  
to the future. Either history is a se-  
ries of individual and unrepeated acts  
which bear no relation to anything other  
than their immediate and unique temporal  
environment, or it is a series of events  
triggered by recurring factors which man-  
ifest themselves as a product of human  
behaviour at all times.

--James Burke, Connections

## Chapter One

### Formative Years:

#### The Beginning of an Experimental Psychologist

*Dr. Theodora M. Abel's interest in psychology began during her undergraduate studies at Vassar through her contact with the experimental methods as taught by Margaret Washburn. Dr. Abel's studies at the University of Paris and Columbia University in the early 1920s solidify her commitment to the value of experimentation in psychological investigation. Abel's utilization of interdisciplinary techniques to enhance the discipline of psychology is seen rooted in this phase of her career. The major psychologies of the mid-1920s (Gestalt, Behaviorism and Psychoanalysis) are mirrored in her published reactions to these movements.*

Theodora Abel's introduction to psychology came quite by chance. When doing undergraduate work at Vassar in 1919, her intended major was history. However, her father's cousin, the secretary of the man who was the head of what is now called the New York School of Social Work, suggested she begin taking social science classes.<sup>1</sup> Her initial class was one taught by Margaret Washburn. Soon, Abel began taking as many psychology classes as history classes. In

her senior year, Abel was selected by Washburn to assist her and another student on a research project concerning the effects of music.<sup>2</sup> This research project initiated Abel in the experimental method of psychology and at this point she decided to be an experimentalist within that field.

Abel's introduction and interest in psychology led her to take numerous classes in physiology and neurology. After her graduation from Vassar in 1921, she decided to enter graduate school. Washburn advised that she see Robert Woodworth at Columbia (Chairman of the Psychology Department). At Washburn's advice, Abel introduced herself, "Ms. Washburn sent me; I wish to come next year as a graduate student, and he said 'certainly' and that is how you got in."<sup>3</sup> There were no recruitment scholarship programs at Columbia during this period.<sup>4</sup> At this early stage of psychology, scholarly contacts still provided a model of mutuality of the student/teacher relationship, which was also characteristic of the discipline as a whole.

In the fall of 1921, Abel entered Columbia. After two weeks, she dropped out to concentrate on music, her second interest. By the second semester, Abel decided to return to Columbia and to remain an amateur violinist. After this decision, Abel's dedication to psychology never wavered. During the second semester she took two classes, one from Woodworth (psychophysiology) and one

from Leta Stetter Hollingworth (exceptional children).

In the summer of 1922, she went to Europe and was invited by friends of the family to remain with them in Paris. Abel agreed and used this occasion to attend the Institut de Psychologie at the Sorbonne. The institute was the first of the French University Institutes and was established in 1920.<sup>5</sup> In her memoirs, written not for the public, Abel recalled how,

I went to the Institut de Psychologie at the Sorbonne. I took various courses, one with Pierre Janet, one with Henri Pieron (laboratory), one with Delacroix, and one with Dumas. Also attended, a few times a course of Simon (Binet, Simon) largely because he took the group on a trip each week to visit all kinds of institutions.

In Dumas' course we would go once a week to St. Anne's and there Dumas would interview a patient for us. We were expected to make a diagnosis as a result of his interviewing. ...

I went to supper at the Curies every Friday night. Eve and I played sonatas before dinner. Mme. Curie was always very sweet and interested. She liked to discuss literature. At the end of the year I was very ashamed of only receiving the notation 'assez bien' on my exams. She insisted that was very good as most foreigners got no notation.<sup>6</sup>

Under the influence of Pieron, French psychology was concerned with the psychophysiological study of the senses.<sup>7</sup> Pieron was instrumental in getting the University of Paris to organize the Institut to offer a training program in general and applied psychology.<sup>8</sup> Having been exposed to these ideas, in 1923, Abel received her Diploma in Psychology.

When she returned to Columbia, she received thirty hours credit for her work at the University of Paris. At the Sorbonne and later at Columbia, Abel was exposed to functionalism, the psychological approach that stressed the uses and purposes of mental processes. The Dynamic psychology of Woodworth was functionalistic; he was seeking agreement between psychologies rather than quarrels.<sup>9</sup> Dynamic psychology, which was not developed at Columbia by Woodworth as some have suggested, evolved independently in many countries.<sup>10</sup> Freud's psychoanalytic psychology and Janet's dissociation school were precursors to this movement. Dynamic psychology was born in the clinic and served as another option to cure man's ills.<sup>11</sup> Rather than being in opposition to the psychologies of the time, it developed from them and assimilated their successful components. Heidbreder recalled Dynamic psychology at Columbia:

Psychology at Columbia is not easy to describe. It stands for no set body of doctrine, taught with the consistency and paternalism found in more closely organized schools. Yet it shows definite and recognizable characteristics. A graduate student in psychology cannot spend many weeks at Columbia without becoming aware of the immense importance in that atmosphere of curves of distribution, of individual differences, of the measurement of intelligence and other human capacities, of experimental procedures and statistical devices, and of the undercurrent of physiological thought. He discovers immediately that psychology does not lead a sheltered life; that it rubs elbows with biology, statistics, education, commerce, industry, and the world of affairs. He encounters many different trends of thought, and

he frequently comes upon the same ones from different angles. But the separate strands of teaching are not knit together for him into a firm and patterned fabric. . . . Columbia students are as definitely marked as those of any other group, but the mark itself is straggling and irregular.<sup>12</sup>

Columbia had the first eclectic psychology department of any university in the United States. In the forefront was the objective psychological approach of Woodworth, demonstrated through "rigorous experimental-statistical methodology."<sup>13</sup>

Upon her return from Europe in 1923, Abel secured part-time employment at the Manhattan Trade School for Girls while attending Columbia. With the groundwork being laid, Abel received permission from Albert Poffenberger to pursue any avenue of psychology which interested her. Her doctoral committee at Columbia was composed of: Poffenberger (chairman), Henry Garrett and Gardner Murphy. Woodworth was on a sabbatical in 1925, but did assist her with her MA thesis in 1924.<sup>14</sup> Because of Poffenberger's interest in vocational psychology and the eclectic position of Columbia, she was permitted to utilize her employment as a setting for her dissertation, "Tested Mentality as Related to Success in Skilled Trade Training."<sup>15</sup> This was printed in 1925 in the journal, Archives of Psychology, started in 1906 by Woodworth to publish the graduate research of Columbia students.<sup>16</sup> According to Thorne, Woodworth's scholarly, objective and eclectic psychology attracted many notable professors during

Woodworth's tenure at Columbia; most noteworthy were: Edward Thorndike, Albert Poffenberger, Henry Garrett, Gardner Murphy, C. J. Warden, Harry Hollingworth, Otto Klineberg, Mortimer Adler, Leta Hollingworth, Prescott Lecky, Lois Murphy, and E. B. Hurlock.<sup>17</sup> Due to the presence of such scholars, enrollment in doctoral programs at Columbia was substantial.<sup>18</sup>

At the completion of her Ph.D. in 1925, and, again, at the recommendation of Ms. Washburn, Abel met Madison Bentley and began teaching at the University of Illinois. Bentley, who had been elected to the presidency of the American Psychological Association in 1925, named his primary psychological approaches as objective, experimental and conceptual.<sup>19</sup> He expected these approaches not only from himself but also from his staff. Abel had now met the three psychologists whom she considers most influential in her life: Margaret Washburn, Robert Woodworth and Madison Bentley. All three were influenced by Wundt's experimental psychology.<sup>20</sup> While associated with Bentley, Abel initially offered a conceptual paper translating Washburn's motor theory into functional constructs.<sup>21</sup> This was immediately followed by an experimental study for which Bentley helped obtain funds. Abel originally started her study, "Attitudes and Galvanic Skin Reflex," at the University of Illinois under the guidance of Bentley; she completed it at Cornell under the guidance of Karl Dallen-



bach. Through her study with the galvanometer she concluded that this instrument could not be used to obtain accurate emotional responses. While others utilized the galvanometer in their research, Abel revealed that this instrument gave incorrect results. The findings of her study were not only of psychological interest, but of interest to anthropological research. As a result of Abel's findings, Margaret Mead concluded that the galvanometer was not a useful instrument for the measurement of emotional response and discontinued its use in the field.<sup>22</sup>

Dr. Abel made the move from the University of Illinois to Cornell when her husband accepted a teaching position in the sociology department at Cornell in 1926. She received permission from E. B. Titchener to use the laboratory facilities to continue her research with the galvanometer, but since the subject matter had no interest for him, she could receive no help from him or his staff. Bentley and Washburn had taken their degrees under the guidance of Titchener. Titchener represented the movement toward psychology as a "pure" science; applied psychology, testing and the study of individual differences, he considered second-rate psychology.<sup>23</sup> Titchener knew that Abel had graduated from Columbia and Dr. Abel recalled:

Titchener would remember that I came from Columbia University and he would ask "Does any-

one know the kind of dissertations they do at Columbia?" Everyone politely replied "No", although the story had been heard before. "At Columbia," Professor Titchener explained, "a bunch of pins are thrown on the ground and a subject is timed while he picks up the pins. Then the subject drinks a glass of beer and an equal number of pins are thrown on the ground. Again he is timed on his speed in picking the pins up. The object of this experiment is to see what effect beer has on the subject's motor coordination." We all politely laughed.<sup>24</sup>

Even with Titchener's objection to the eclecticism of Columbia, he recognized Abel's potential as a psychologist by recommending her for full membership in Sigma Xi, in 1926. Titchener's death the following year initiated the rapid disintegration of his school of psychology, a disintegration that had begun during his last unproductive years.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to investigate the diverse possibilities that the discipline of psychology displayed at the time of Abel's introduction to this field. Individual psychological orientations, such as Dr. Abel's, mirror the diversity available. The movements of psychology, during the late 1920s and 1930s, were behaviorism, gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis. The debate between functionalism and structuralism had become obsolete. Functionalism had examined the utility of mental processes--what does this process accomplish in the world. Structuralism had pursued the mental content through introspection --the consequence of the mental phenomena as applied by

the bodily process.

Behaviorism, in the United States, began with John B. Watson. His school of psychology was opposed to the intangible and the "unapproachable" aspects of functionalism and structuralism.<sup>26</sup> He considered the various schools of psychology abstract and less than a science. Watson set up one of the earliest animal laboratories and, since the psychology of the time was concerned with conscious experience, this left him outside the parameters of recognized psychology.<sup>27</sup> One of the few psychologists at the time to state the usefulness of animal studies was Margaret Washburn.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Watson's reaction to the widespread notion that his approach was useless to psychology was to initiate behaviorism as a movement in psychology. The first written expression of this was published in 1913. It was an emotional appeal, requesting that psychology disregard the use of consciousness, claiming that the debate between functionalism and structuralism was incomprehensible and "that behaviorism is the only consistent and logical functionalism."<sup>29</sup> This appeal resulted in his election to the presidency of the American Psychological Association in 1915.<sup>30</sup> The problem for psychology, seen through Watson's eyes, was the prediction and control of behavior.

Abel's exposure to behaviorism happened primarily during the period of her brief contact with Thorndike in 1924.

Thorndike taught at Columbia and was involved in animal laboratory studies. The theories arrived at in these studies were extended to human learning and intelligence.<sup>31</sup> Woodworth saw potential contributions of all movements within psychology and his eclectic reaction to behaviorism was repeated in Abel's appropriation of the best methods that his approach had to offer.<sup>32</sup> There is no other evidence of behaviorism in Abel's later work. Abel reacted negatively to behaviorism as an avenue of psychological investigation; instead, she chose to express herself through publications in gestalt psychology.

Gestalt psychology unfolded in Germany, as a modern development, with the publication of Max Wertheimer's paper in 1912.<sup>33</sup> With two other psychologists, Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka, gestalt psychology rose as a movement against the Wundtian approach just as functionalism had risen against Wundtianism in America twenty years before. Gestalt psychology called for a complete revision of psychology, as did behaviorism.<sup>34</sup>

Gestalt psychology, unlike other movements of psychology, did not indicate its nature by the term it employed. Literally, gestalt means "form" or "shape." Gestalt psychologists use this term in dealing with the whole and its data, called phenomena. Man experiences wholes, not units isolated from the experience. A commonly used example when explaining this aspect is music.

Notes played in isolation do not constitute a musical expression, but when a string of notes is played, then that sum constitutes the melody.<sup>35</sup> It was this whole that the gestaltists examined. Gestalt psychology departed from experimental psychology in that gestalt psychology was concerned with concepts, ideas and assumptions, and was philosophical in nature. Watson objected to this approach, saying that "Gestalt is still a part of introspective psychology."<sup>36</sup> Köhler stated that behaviorism and introspectionism have much in common.<sup>37</sup> He objected to the special attitude required of the introspectionist in denying immediate experience; behaviorism discarded consciousness and claimed to be discovering a complex pattern of behavior based on elementary processes.<sup>38</sup> The overall objection of the gestaltists was that other psychological approaches took their information piecemeal rather than in wholes.

Modern gestalt psychology began with Wertheimer in his studies of perception, of movement and apparent movement--the *psi* phenomenon. There was some reluctance in the United States to adhere to a psychology that had rudiments of philosophy, as gestalt psychology had, and contained no quantitative measurement, as was the vogue in psychology during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>39</sup> Only after Lewin's pictorial portrayal of the theory and Koffka's exhaustive work, did gestalt psychology become accepted by

American psychologists.<sup>40</sup> Lewin's work on conation, the act of directed mental or physical work, gave great impetus to the gestalt movement in the United States. While some considered Lewin to be in the dynamic psychology school, he was considered a gestalt psychologist by the gestaltists.<sup>41</sup>

Dr. Abel's involvement with gestalt psychology follows the psychological approach in which she was scholastically trained. Functionalism placed the individual within an environment, as did gestalt psychology, and each was concerned with individual differences. Köhler also termed gestalt psychology dynamic, as Woodworth called his approach; gestalt was "certainly not less dynamic than Woodworth's brand."<sup>42</sup> Abel studied with Wertheimer at the New School for Social Research in 1935 to 1936. She was a Fellow on the Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation from 1935 to 1936 and received a grant from the Progressive Education Association to study the thinking processes in adolescents. In her 1941 study, Dr. Abel utilized the conceptual techniques developed by Lewin for the measurement of the dynamics of behavior.<sup>43</sup> With the suggestions offered by Wertheimer, Abel skillfully devised tasks that would measure conative as well as cognitive modes of psychological expression of students in an academic situation.

The tasks forged in this study involved procedures

contrived to result in completed and uncompleted tasks. In a 1938 study, completed as part of the previous study, Dr. Abel noted the tensions dealt with uncompleted and completed tasks.<sup>44</sup> This corroborated Lewin's dynamic concepts regarding restoration of equilibrium.<sup>45</sup> The unsatisfied need in the student created tension which resulted in disequilibrium and the methodology employed by the student, whether realistic or not, was considered crucial in the understanding of the environmental situation. Using the Schneider index to measure neuro-circulatory reaction, Abel found that those individuals with a higher degree of functional fitness recalled more interrupted tasks and were concerned with failure. Those with a low functional fitness recalled completed tasks and repressed failure.<sup>46</sup> Dr. Abel's findings were confirmed in a later independent study.<sup>47</sup> Through these investigations, which used a gestalt framework, Dr. Abel effectively examined specific areas that dealt with the thinking processes of adolescents. While Dr. Abel's publications dealt almost exclusively with gestalt psychology during the 1930s, other psychological approaches, such as psychoanalysis, would have been available, had she chosen to employ them.

The formal occasion for the introduction of psychoanalysis into the United States was in 1909 when Freud was invited by Stanley Hall to be a guest lecturer at

the twentieth anniversary of the founding of Clark University.<sup>48</sup> Also accompanying Freud to Clark University were Carl Jung, Sandor Ferenczi and Ernst Jones. Freud's lectures were immediately translated and published in the American Journal of Psychology in 1910. Freud was surprised to discover that he already had a following in the United States.<sup>49</sup>

Dr. Abel's reaction to psychoanalytic theory was negative, until the late 1940s. Her training as an experimental psychologist did not involve examination of the unconscious. Janet, at the University of Paris, had been a pupil of Charcot, as Freud had, and was a psychopathologist, as Freud was.<sup>50</sup> But Janet focussed on the conscious rather than on the unconscious. Janet often ridiculed Freud, and later became a behaviorist, "perhaps by way of reaction to Freud's [concept of the] unconscious."<sup>51</sup> At Columbia, there was little interest in psychoanalytic theory.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Abel's involvement in gestalt psychology continued her distance from psychoanalytic theory. Gestalt psychology was not interested in the unconscious; the focus, instead, was on the conscious. Abel's usage of the Rorschach technique did not require exploration of the idiosyncratic associations her subjects produced; the fantasies utilized in the Rorschach method are dealt with at face value. The latent content investigation necessary for psychoanalytic work



was not required of the Rorschach.<sup>53</sup> Dr. Abel chose, as her avenue of exploration, the experimental method. We shall see, in Chapter Three of this study, how psychoanalytic studies entered at a later time into her career as a psychologist.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel, 10 January 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Washburn, Theodora Mead (Abel), Margaret Child, "The Effects of Immediate Repetition on the Pleasantness or Unpleasantness of Music," ed. Max Schoen (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1927), pp. 199-210. Dr. Walter Bingham erroneously stated in the introduction to this work that the research project submitted by Washburn, Mead (Abel), and Child won the \$500 prize money from the Edison Phonograph Company. The prize money was shared with Dr. George Dickinson of Vassar for another study Dr. Washburn submitted. For a discussion of this, see Margaret Floy Washburn, "Autobiography," in Vol. II of History of Psychology in Autobiography, ed. Carl Murchinson, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 350.

<sup>3</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel, 10 January 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Fredrick Thorne, "Reflections on the Golden Age of Columbia Psychology," Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences 12 no. 2 (April, 1976), 159.

<sup>5</sup> William Sahakian, History of Psychology: A Source

Book in Systematic Psychology (Itasca: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1968), 531.

<sup>6</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Remembrances of My Life," unpublished memoirs, n. d., 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Reuchlin, "The Historical Background for National Trends in Psychology: France," Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 1 no. 1 (1965), 116.

<sup>8</sup> Henri Pieron, "Autobiography," in Vol. IV of History of Psychology in Autobiography, ed. Carl Murchinson (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 257.

<sup>9</sup> Edwin Boring, A History of Experimental Psychology (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 565; Robert Sessions Woodworth, Dynamic Psychology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918).

<sup>10</sup> Edna Heidbreder, Seven Psychologies (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 288.

<sup>11</sup> A [braham] A [aron] Roback, History of American Psychology (New York: Library Publishers, Inc., 1952), p. 244.

<sup>12</sup> Heidbreder, p. 291-92; for another account of a student's Columbia University days, see Robert I. Watson, "Working Papers," in The Psychologist's ed. T. S. Krawiec (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 275-97.

<sup>13</sup> Thorne, p. 161.

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel,

11 April 1979.

<sup>15</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Tested Mentality as Related to Success in Skilled Trade Training," Archives of Psychology, 77 (1925), 5-82

<sup>16</sup> Committee of Colleagues, Columbia University, Psychological Issues: Selected Papers of Robert S. Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), v; Thorne, p. 161.

<sup>17</sup> Thorne, p. 159.

<sup>18</sup> Columbia granted the highest number of Ph. D.'s in psychology during the period of 1884-1948, the years of Cattell's and Woodworth's influence. See, R. S. Harper, "Notes and Discussions," American Journal of Psychology, 62 (1949), 579-87.

<sup>19</sup> Madison Bentley, "The Major Categories of Psychology," Psychological Review 33 (1926), 71-105.

<sup>20</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel, 12 October 1979.

<sup>21</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Washburn's Motor Theory: A Contribution to Functional Psychology," American Journal of Psychology, 39 (1927), 91-105

<sup>22</sup> Margaret Mead, Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 125; For a history of the galvanometer, see C. Landis and H. DeWick, "The Electrical Phenomena of the Skin (Psychogalvanic Reflex)," Psychological Bulletin, 1 no. 26

(1929), 64-119.

23 Boring, p. 414; Heidbreder, p. 120.

24 Theodora M. Abel, "An Experience During the Last Year in the Life of E. B. Titchener," American Psychologist, 23 (August, 1978), 768.

25 Rand Evans, "E. B. Titchener and His Lost System," in Historical Conceptions of Psychology ed. Mary Henle et al. (New York: Springer Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), p. 83.

26 John Watson, Behaviorism (New York: People's Institute Publishing Co., Inc., 1925-26), p. 6.

27 Robert Woodworth, Contemporary Schools of Psychology (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1948), p. 69.

28 Margaret Washburn, The Animal Mind (New York: Macmillan Co., 1908).

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30 John Watson, "The Place of the Conditioned Reflex in Psychology," Psychological Review, 23 (1916), 89-116.

31 Heidbreder, p. 296.

32 Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel,  
23 April 1979.

33 Boring, p. 594-95.

34 Heidbreder, p. 344.

35 Boring, p. 588.

36 John Watson, Behaviorism (New York: W. W. Norton

and Co., 1930), p. 1.

37 Wolfgang Köhler, Gestalt Psychology (New York: New American Library, 1947), p. 42.

38 Heidbreder, p. 234.

39 Roback, p. 317-18.

40 Roback, p. 317.

41 Roback, p. 318.

42 Roback, p. 314.

43 Theodora M. Abel, "Measurement of Dynamic Aspects of Behavior Among Adolescents," Journal of Genetic Psychology, 58 (1941), 3-26.

44 Theodora M. Abel, "Neuro-Circulatory Reactions and the Recall of Unfinished Tasks," Journal of Psychology, 6 (1938), 377-83.

45 Kurt Lewin, A Dynamic Theory of Personality, trans. D. K. Adams and K. E. Zener (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1935).

46 E. C. Schneider, The Physiology of Muscular Activity (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1933).

47 George Strother and Donald Cook, "Neurocirculatory Reactions and a Group Stress Situation," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 17 no. 4 (1953), 267-68.

48 For one of the most complete accounts of Freud's visit to the United States, see William Koelsch, "Freud Discovers America," The Virginia Quarterly Review, 46 no. 1 (Winter, 1970), 115-32.

49 Roback, p. 287.

50 Boring, p. 696.

51 Roback, p. 245.

52 Thorne, p. 161.

53 Seymour Fisher and Roger Greenberg, The Scientific Credibility of Freud's Theories and Therapy (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), p. 281.

Personal figures get their definition only when seen against the social and cultural background in which they have their being.

--Clyde Kluckhohn, Henry Murray and David Schneider.

Personality in Nature, Society and Culture

Man is the cultural animal; his culture molds and kneads him, pushes him and pulls him from the first feeding. Man without culture is not merely deficient or crippled--he is unthinkable.

--Peter Gay. Art and Act

... culture must communicate ideals, setting as internalities those distinctions between right actions and wrong that unite men and permit them the fundamental pleasure of agreement. Culture is another name for a design of motives directing the self outward, toward those communal purposes in which alone the self can be realized and satisfied.

--Philip Reiff. The Triumph of the Therapeutic



## Chapter Two

### Two Disciplines:

#### The Integration of Psychology and Anthropology

*Dr. Abel's transition from experimental psychology to applied psychology is witnessed through her published work in cultural psychology and anthropology. Abel's expertise in the usage of projective techniques enables her to examine and to report on distinctions within a variety of cultures and the distinctiveness of those cultures. Dr. Abel demonstrates that psychology and anthropology can reciprocally benefit when their methodologies are combined.*

Dr. Abel's interdisciplinary sensitivity may be viewed in that part of her published work that offers crossovers between psychological and anthropological concerns. Her responsiveness, to the utilization of methodologies other than those of a purely psychological nature, can best be seen by first presenting a brief portrayal of anthropology from the 1920s onward.

As late as the 1930s, there were still areas in the world that remained untouched by Western influence. Anthropologists entered into these areas to detail the cul-

ture of these peoples. During this decade, anthropology was preoccupied with functionalism and the numerous meanings of the term "function." Two trends resulted from this preoccupation, the social structural approach and the biopsychological approach. Alfred Radcliff-Brown was the spokesman for those anthropologists of the social structural approach, and he defined function as the interrelationship of groups, especially those organized around territorial, kinship and political ranges.<sup>1</sup> Their view was that, if a particular group was to be termed functional, a contribution to the maintenance of the social structure must be evident. Bronislaw Malinowski was the spokesman for those anthropologists who emphasized the biopsychological needs of the individual.<sup>2</sup> Malinowski stressed the needs of the individual rather than the needs of the group. While proponents of each approach stressed their methods as being incompatible with those of other researchers, there were many similarities in their respective methodologies. Both approaches centered on the study of the existing social institutions, with each culture being viewed as a complete unit; in each, a definition of function was arrived at in terms of social effect on the culture.<sup>3</sup> Each approach utilized intensive field experience with the particular organism (individual or group) being its central feature; each approach was rooted in its opposition to the previous existing tradition. Dr. Abel's exposure to the

functional psychology of Columbia enabled her to recognize its interrelationship with anthropological theory. Functionalism, as she later defined it, was the description of "the modes of performance of the total organism."<sup>4</sup> As can be seen, for Dr. Abel the organism (individual) was crucial regardless of whether the discipline was psychology or anthropology.

Franz Boas was the most influential figure in anthropology in the United States during the first half of this century. Among his students at Columbia were: Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Fay-Cooper Cole, Edwin Sapir, Melville Herskovits, Alexander Goldenweiser, Alexander Lesser, Paul Radin, Clark Wissler, Leslie Speir, J. Alden Mason, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Ruth Bunzel, M. F. Ashley Montagu and Frank Speck. Boas not only had a fatherly control over anthropology at Columbia from 1896 until his death in 1941, but he founded the American Anthropological Association (1900) and the American Folk-Lore Society (1888) and updated the American Anthropologist in 1898.<sup>5</sup> Instead of formulating a "school" of anthropology, his quest was the purification of anthropology by ridding anthropology of its amateurs and requiring ethnographic research in the field as the core experience. Boas employed no single research method but rather an eclectic method which included psychological, sociological, functional, and diffusionist methods.<sup>6</sup>

It was through this eclectic approach to the study of anthropology that Boas advanced the field of culture and personality studies. Boas argued:

An error of modern anthropology, as I see it, lies in the overemphasis on historical reconstruction, the importance of which should not be minimized, as against a penetrating study of the individual under the stress of the culture in which he lives.<sup>7</sup>

His dwindling interest in historical reconstruction as a force of anthropology was accompanied by his increased interest in the structure of the mind as accounting for cultural regularities. The method utilized by the Boasian program was the gathering of ethnographic facts that had little to contribute to the understanding of sociocultural systems. The facts collected amounted to relative trivia which were inadequate for a treatment of culture.<sup>8</sup> Anthropologists, at this time, performed their studies with little or no psychological training.<sup>9</sup> This was an era when interdisciplinary instruments of these related sciences were rarely employed.

One of the few anthropologists who had some psychological training was Margaret Mead. Although Mead initially began graduate studies in psychology and completed her master's degree at the same time that she was completing the requirements for her doctorate in anthropology, she discontinued her formal relationship with psychology

at the completion of her master's.<sup>10</sup> In 1931, before she left for New Guinea, Mead was given a brief introduction to the administration of the Rorschach by Dr. David Levy, who introduced the Rorschach method to the United States. Upon her return, Mead submitted the Rorschach records to Dr. Bruno Klopfer only to be told that they were inadequate. It was not until 1946, when the Rorschach methods had been refined to include records from primitive cultures, that Mead's protocols could finally be scored. In 1946, these protocols were again sent to Dr. Klopfer, and this time, were accepted. Along with Klopfer's interpretations, analyses were made by Drs. Molly Harrower, Martha Wolfenstein and Theodora M. Abel. Each psychologist offered useful information on the use of the Rorschach for the analysis of culture. In her "Comment on the Rorschach Analysis," Dr. Mead agreed with Dr. Abel's findings that the data, as it was interpreted, was not as relevant as it was in this culture where the Rorschach had been extensively investigated.<sup>11</sup> By using only the protocol and localization chart, Dr. Abel was able to score the Rorschach and to provide an analysis that stressed the cultural applicability of the components.

One of Rorschach's protegés was Emile Oberholzer, who immigrated to the United States in the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> Oberholzer scored, computed, interpreted and evaluated the Rorschach protocols given by Cora DuBois on her field-

work with the Alorese. Oberholzer acknowledged that he had no basis for qualifying a form, but he made assumptions and verified his assumptions with the ethnologist. Thus, the groundwork was laid for these two sciences, psychology and anthropology, with similar aims, to attain scientific certitude. Oberholzer recounted:

The ethnographer worked from her knowledge of the individuals; I worked blind from the Rorschach materials. The degree of coincidence between our ranking was so high that it left no doubt that the principles of the test could be applied cross culturally.<sup>13</sup>

An integral part that lead to the collaboration of the two sciences was the anthropologists' use of psychological terminology to elaborate on culture as a determinant of human behavior.<sup>14</sup> While cross-cultural scientific methods had been developed within psychology, contributions to psychology from anthropologists were considerable.<sup>15</sup>

One such collaborative analysis by psychology and anthropology was the research carried out during the period of 1953-1954 on the peasant culture of Montserrat, British West Indies.<sup>16</sup> The anthropologist in this study was Dr. Rhoda Métraux and the psychologist was Dr. Theodora M. Abel. A crucial issue that was dealt with in one initial study was the "problem of congruence of judgment in collaborative field work, when the personality in a culture is studied by the methods both of the cultural anthropolo-

gist and the clinical psychologist."<sup>17</sup> The discussion of the study was limited to the selection of those individuals determined to have deviant personalities. This determination was based on the comparison of the observations of the anthropologist, the Rorschach test results secured by the psychologist, and the opinions of those within the community of Montserrat. No attempt was made to define the character structure of the culture studied; what was accomplished was the grouping of individuals within that culture and the extent of agreement between the two scientists using their own methodology. This study elucidated the fact that the two methods of observation tended to support each other. While differences lay in details observed, no marked deviance was observed within this particular culture. Oberholzer's finding that the two approaches can offer collaborative results was verified.<sup>18</sup>

In her 1948 presidential address to the Society of Projective Techniques, Dr. Abel illustrated the use of the Rorschach test in the study of culture in the field to field anthropologists.<sup>19</sup> The three areas where the Rorschach can be used in the study of man are in the determination of psychopathology, development, and culture. The test itself was designed to examine three measures of personality: intellect, emotion directed inward, and emotion directed outside the person. Dr. Abel keenly demon-

strated the problems in the administration and interpretation of the Rorschach to those of another culture. The mere administration of the Rorschach is difficult enough to those of a culture similar to that of the administrator. She pointed out that adequate reasons must be given to justify the test to those being tested, and that it is important for the administrator to have a sense of rapport with the subject. The language used in the administration of the test must be consistent, and careful translation must be made to those with languages other than that of the administrator. Finally, the nature of the inquiry is also crucial to elaborate before the test is given. There are many problems in the area of interpretation of personality in reference to a specific culture. Interpretations must be made in reference to the specific culture under study and not in comparison to another culture. What may be considered a normal personality structure in one culture may be considered aberrant in another. This was consistent with the findings of Benedict.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Abel went on to state that

Of course, the Rorschach is not the complete answer to the study of culture as it is not the complete answer to diagnosis in psychopathology. Other projective techniques and measurement as well as interviews and observations will give a clearer conception of the nature of a given culture than the Rorschach alone can. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the blood do not tell us all we want to know about the physical condition of the human organism nor about the



exact nature of a virus disease but it tells us a great deal, especially if the tools employed and the observations made during the analysis are precise and careful. Similarly, the Rorschach should be used as precisely and accurately as possible in our studies of personality-in-culture, on a much larger scale than has been done so far, and by individuals competent to handle it as a precision tool. Only then can we make the contributions we might both to the study of culture and to Rorschach theory itself.<sup>21</sup>

This key element, that the Rorschach alone cannot fully answer the questions concerning the personality-in-culture, was validated in a study that came out about the same time as Dr. Abel's presidential address.<sup>22</sup> Lantz stated that to use the norms developed in one culture invalidated the study if comparisons were made with another culture. Reliability and validity in the usage of the Rorschach is maintained if norms are developed within the culture investigated.

Rorschach mentioned the use of the technique he developed for the examination of culture and offered only one example: the comparison of the differences in protocols of Swiss from different regions in that country.<sup>23</sup> The Swiss subjects were from around Bern and Appenzeller. Rorschach discovered that his technique could be used to elaborate on cultural differences and that differences also showed up among the schizophrenics from these two Swiss areas. Rorschach himself did not use the term "cultural"; he did use the term "race." The differences

in protocols he considered to be the result of biological differences. Dr. Abel, in her address, explained how the Rorschach was used effectively by M. and R. Bleuler, two field anthropologists, as early as 1935. They, too, believed that they were examining racial differences.<sup>24</sup>

The concept of explaining human differences as due to race was not new. Aristotle, in the fifth century, B.C., discussed the bravery of the peoples in the cool climate of northern Europe and their lack of intelligence; Asians were intellectual but did not have the spirit to be leaders; and the Greeks, being in the middle, were supreme because they had the good qualities of each.<sup>25</sup> The basis for racial theory in the late 1800s and early 1900s was the writing of Count Arthur Joseph de Gobineau. His four volume study, Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines, published in Paris in 1855, was to support claims of his own racial superiority. Klineberg, commenting on Gobineau, stated that

He [Gobineau] preached the superiority of the White race over the other races, and the Aryans over all other Whites. The Black race, in Gobineau's theory, represents passion and is the source of lyricism and the artistic temperament; the Yellow man represents utility, order, mediocrity; the White is the expression of reason and honor.

The supreme race is the Aryan, and the Teutons are its purest modern representative. Civilization sprang from the Aryans, declining when the Aryan blood became diluted. The Indian civilization was Aryan; the Egyptian was created by an Aryan colony from India; the Greek was due

to Aryans with some Semitic intermixture. Civilization without an Aryan creator is unthinkable.<sup>26</sup>

The writers of racial theory assumed a subjective viewpoint to espouse the race they were inclined to select as "supreme."<sup>27</sup> However, as Klineberg concluded, "...there is no scientific proof of racial differences in mentality."<sup>28</sup> His conclusion was representative of social psychologists in the 1920s and 1930s who were concerned with removing the stereotypes generated by racial theorists. The controversy continues between those pro-race and those denying racial theory altogether.<sup>29</sup>

An indication of Dr. Abel's concepts on racial theory is seen in her master's thesis which dealt with "National Differences and Preferences in Beliefs."<sup>30</sup> She recognized the fact that the interest at the time was centered in the study of national and racial differences. Her study was based on a questionnaire method developed by one of her professors and was modified for this study.<sup>31</sup> The conclusions she arrived at were based on national rather than racial lines:

... these differences are more national than racial, depending on a combination of causes, inheritance and traditional and social environment. The only instance in which the two Slavic countries show similarity is in their preference for intellectual sources of pleasure, otherwise they differ more from each other than they do from the French and the American nations. Therefore, we feel that we can make no general-

izations about racial differences among Slavs, Latins and Anglo-Saxons.<sup>32</sup>

National characteristics rather than the unscientific approach of the racial theorists had the objective support of the scientific community. Linton's conception of commonality in national character as a "modal" personality structure is the main component in the numerous definitions offered for national character.<sup>33</sup> By using statistical analysis, determination can be made for discovering the modal personality that is present most often within a society. Linton does take into account, as Dr. Abel did almost twenty years earlier, that while statements can be made concerning a particular national character, there are great variations within that society.

The investigation of national character, an approach derived from cultural anthropology, is concerned with the personality in culture, not with the individual in society or isolated from it. One representative study was Dr. Abel's 1949 study "Some Aspects of Personality of Chinese as Revealed by the Rorschach Test."<sup>34</sup> This study investigated the personality of those Chinese born and educated in China and those born and reared in the United States. The purpose of the study was to elaborate on personality characteristics of the Chinese and, by utilizing the comparative methods within the study, to show the effects of acculturation. This study was represented as revealing the

impact of occidental culture on the Chinese personality.<sup>35</sup> Gorer, in objecting to this type of investigation, contended that the description of the national character of people away from their territory can only result, at best, in probabilities that require further investigation.<sup>36</sup> However, Gorer recognized the value of this investigation within the limits of the science of psychology of the time. Dr. Abel noted the need for further investigation and the limitations of her study. She revealed agreement with the objections that Gorer raised in his article before his article was written, and she offered her study as a preliminary investigation when she stated that

It is hoped that future studies in the field of projective testing among Chinese will have a wider scope than was possible to achieve within the limits of the present investigation, and that field workers in China itself, working in the more isolated rural and urban areas, will throw further light on what comprises not only the external status personality of the Chinese, but what constitutes the deeper dynamics of the total personality configuration in a more purely Chinese cultural environment where the subjects have been less influenced by a variety of cultural impacts than they were in this piece of research.<sup>37</sup>

There have been numerous references to this particular study.<sup>38</sup> For example, Lindzey credited Abel and Hsu for their usage of the Rorschach but objected to the fact that no information was offered concerning the circumstances of administration and objected to the lack of any attempt

to verify the statistical significance of differences at which they arrived.

Another study on the personality-in-culture dealt with the Mexican character. Dr. Abel collaborated in 1951 with Dr. Renata A. Calabresi in the scoring of the Rorschach protocols for Lewis in his study of a Mexican village.<sup>39</sup> The Rorschach protocols were analyzed without knowledge of the culture or the individuals tested. This method of examination at a distance was an established technique in culture studies.<sup>40</sup> Lewis studied the entire community of Tepoztlán, Mexico, the same community examined by Redfield seventeen years earlier.<sup>41</sup> The Rorschach protocols were not collected by either Dr. Abel or Dr. Calabresi but were collected, in Spanish, by Ruth Lewis, wife of Oscar Lewis, over a four-month period in 1943-1944. Test collection began in the families where rapport had been established and where the investigators had been living. Cultural animosity to studying and thinking, and the disapproval of the local healer led to some difficulties in the collection of the protocols. Ultimately one hundred and six Rorschach protocols were obtained, evenly distributed in sex and in age groupings (aged, adult, adolescent and children). Abel's and Calabresi's exposure to Tepoztlán culture was limited to several articles by Lewis. Abel and Calabresi meticulously tied their inferences concerning personality to

the particular elements within the test by giving clear indications of how they arrived at their conclusions. Lindzey raised some objections to the methodology employed but acknowledged that Dr. Abel admitted the weaknesses of this study in a paper delivered in 1953 at the First Inter-American Congress of Psychology.<sup>42</sup> The flaws present in the previous study on the Chinese were corrected; however, other problems arose that required further study. As in any advance in science, progression is made slowly and, oftentimes, awkwardly. The serious flaw in this examination was the failure to collaborate with the ethnographer. As Dr. Abel related, this was the procedure specifically chosen by Lewis.<sup>43</sup>

Dr. Abel maintained a long-standing friendship with Dr. Margaret Mead and Dr. Ruth Benedict. All three were at Columbia during the 1920s; Abel and Mead were classmates and often discussed the many problems of the experimental psychologist. Their mutual professional influence can be witnessed in Mead's utilization of Abel's findings of the galvanometer (Chapter One, of this study) and their parallel studies of personality, with Abel taking the psychological viewpoint and Mead an anthropological approach.<sup>44</sup> Abel was introduced to Benedict through Mead's increased interest in anthropology. The three maintained frequent contact until the death of Benedict in 1947 and the death of Mead in 1978.<sup>45</sup> Dr. Abel's expertise in the utilization

of the Rorschach in cross-cultural studies and her friendship with Mead and Benedict enabled her to become involved with the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Culture project originally begun by Mead and Benedict. With the death of Ruth Benedict, Dr. Rhoda Métraux continued as Mead's co-leader. Over one hundred anthropologists and psychologists were involved in this two year project funded by the Office of Naval Research.<sup>46</sup> Each senior member of the research team was to function in at least two roles of differing status in the research group. For example, Dr. Abel was the convener of the Clinical Group and acted as the clinical psychologist in the groups examining the French and Chinese cultures, and she was also a member of the Polish group.<sup>47</sup> In Abel's study, "An Analysis of French Projective Tests," a battery of projective tests were administered to a limited number of French subjects.<sup>48</sup> As Abel had stated earlier, a large number of subjects is not needed to gain insight into a particular culture.<sup>49</sup> With the material obtained and scored, hypotheses were offered about the personality of the French. The authors made clear the limitations of the study. They offered this study as a preliminary investigation, and they suggested further examination to arrive at conclusions concerning French culture.

The most important methodological finding in the use of projective tests in the Research in Contemporary Cul-



tures project came from Dr. Abel's conclusions. She found that in order for projective tests to reveal cultural regularities, a minimum of two groups is necessary for comparative purposes. The two groups under comparison are given equal weight and may be male and female, foreign born and reared versus native born and reared, or any combination given equal value.<sup>50</sup>

Culture and Psychotherapy, a book co-authored by Drs. Abel and Métraux, brought out the fact that occurrences in one culture will often go beyond that culture to affect the entire world.<sup>51</sup> To integrate these cross-cultural consequences requires examination, understanding, and appreciation of other cultural settings. This understanding begins with the awareness of the cultural patterning in which the individual was reared. The two authors offered a definition of culture as being " ... the product and the process of humanization."<sup>52</sup> This is congruent with the various definitions offered by others in writing on culture.<sup>53</sup> Through the process of individual learning, the individual becomes a transmitter of his culture and can share with others who have a similar background. The understanding and appreciation of another culture can be fully experienced if there is a firm understanding of one's own culture. Dr. Abel's understanding of culture originated from her intensive and detailed work with special groups and their ways of responding to American culture.

These groups were the normal and subnormal girls in an industrial school, the patients of Letchworth Village (a mental hospital in New York), and the students of Sarah Lawrence College.

Within the American culture an individual has the option to respond in a number of different ways. A close examination of one of Abel's studies illuminates her understanding of the variety of psychological expression in the American culture. "A Study of a Group of Subnormal Girls Successfully Adjusted in Industry and the Community" utilized eighty-four girls chosen at random from a large group in the adjustment classes at the Manhattan High School for Women's Garment Trades.<sup>54</sup> Fifty-two percent of these subjects were of Italian ancestry, twelve percent were Jewish, eleven percent were Slavic, and the remaining percentage was made up of nationalities represented with less frequency. The nationalities represented were first- and second-generation American. During this period, there were still many immigrants from Western Europe who were not acculturated and were able to remain in their respective sections of the community; the large number of Italians in this study indicates this. Abel noted that forty-nine percent of those in the ninth grade in the regular high school classes at the Trade School were also of Italian ancestry. She offered as a possible explanation that first- and second-generation

Italians were not adverse to entering this field to get training. While this explanation was conjecture, Osgood offers a possible explanation for this behavior based on Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory.<sup>55</sup> Though no mention is made of Dr. Abel's study, there are parallels. In Dr. Abel's study, these overprotected women were, for the first time, permitted to leave home, unescorted, and seek training for possible employment. Still, their training was in an area that remained an activity acceptable for women. While there was inconsistency in the cultural expectations in that the women were leaving home, the inconsistency was bearable. Success, according to Dr. Abel's findings, was a combination of stable environment, self-respect and ambition, placement, and the attitude demonstrated towards the girl by the training staff.

Dr. Abel's concern with subnormal girls in their daily life led to a collaborated effort with Elaine Kinder that resulted in the publication of The Subnormal Adolescent Girl.<sup>56</sup> At this time, no literature offered the comprehensiveness of this book in portraying the daily life of the subnormal girl.<sup>57</sup> While her work with subnormals did not deal directly with culture, it is presented to epitomize her grasp of the disadvantaged within the American culture. The view of culture, as seen through the examination of the mentally disadvan-

taged or other special groups, appears paradoxical. However, the dividing line between normal and abnormal is not clear, and one is used to define the other.

Dr. Abel showed, through her published ideas, that psychology and anthropology reciprocally benefit when their methodologies are consolidated. She demonstrated how the crossovers between the two disciplines can enhance the ability of researchers to perceive distinguishing characteristics of people. This was seen in her published articles on the Chinese, the peasant villagers of Montserrat, and the members of the Mexican community of Tepoztlán. Many of her early studies were of an exploratory nature. The results and/or conclusions of these exploratory statements are now considered fact and common knowledge.<sup>58</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, "The Social Organization of Australian Tribes," Oceania, 1 (1931), 326-456; "On the Concept of Function in Social Sciences," American Anthropologist, 37 (1935), 394-402.

<sup>2</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis," American Journal of Sociology, 44 (1939), 938-64.

<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Kabery, "Malinowski's Contribution to Fieldwork Methods and the Writing of Ethnography," ed. F. Firth, Man and Culture (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), 71-91.

<sup>4</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Washburn's Motor Theory: A Contribution to Functional Psychology," American Journal of Psychology, 39 (1927), 91-105

<sup>5</sup> Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1968), p. 251.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Lewis Kroeber, "History and Science in Anthropology," American Anthropologist, 37 (1935), 539-69.

<sup>7</sup> Franz Boas, Race, Language and Culture (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 269.

<sup>8</sup> Helen Codere, "The Understanding of the Kwakiutl," ed. W. Goldschmidt, The Anthropology of Franz Boas, Memoir 89 (New York: The American Anthropological Association, 1959), p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> Ralph Linton, The Cultural Background of Personality (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1945), xiii-xv.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Mead, Blackberry Winter (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 122.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Mead, The Mountain Arapesh, Vol 41, No. 3, (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1949), 386-88.

<sup>12</sup> David Rapaport, Merton Gill and Roy Shafer, Diagnostic Psychological Testing rev. ed. (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1968), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Emil Oberholzer, "Rorschach's Experiment and the Alorese," in The People of Alor ed. Cora DuBois, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 589.

<sup>14</sup> George De Vos and Arthur Hippler, "Cultural Psychology: Comparative Studies of Human Behavior," ed. Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, The Handbook of Social Psychology 2nd ed. (Menlo Park, Ca: Addison Wesley Pub. Co., 1954), p. 323.

<sup>15</sup> This represents a small sample of those anthropologists using psychology as a foundation in their writings, Louis Gottschak, Clyde Kluckhohn and Robert Angell,

The Use of Personal Documents in History, Anthropology, and Sociology (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1945); Irving Hollowell, "Rorschach as an Aid in the Study of Personalities in Primitive Societies," Rorschach Research Exchange 4 (1940), 106; Florence Klockhohn, "The Participant Observer Technique in Small Communities," American Journal of Sociology 46 (1940), 331-43; Bronislaw Malinowski, A Scientific Theory of Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935); Margaret Mead, "Social Anthropology and its Relation to Psychiatry," in F. Alexander and H. H. Ross, eds. Dynamic Psychiatry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950); W. H. R. Rivers, Kinship and Social Organization (London: Constable, 1914); C. G. Seligman, "Anthropology and Psychology," Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 54 (1924), 13-46.

<sup>16</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Rhoda Métraux, "Pruebas Proyectivas en una Comunidad Rural: Montserrat," Criminalia, 12 no. 2 (1956), 100-108; Abel and Métraux, "Normal and Deviant Behavior in a Peasant Community: Montserrat, B. W. I.," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 27 no. 1 (1957), 167-84; Abel and Métraux, "Sex Differences in a Negro Peasant Community: Montserrat, B. W. I.," Journal of Projective Techniques, 23 no. 2 (1959), 127-43; Abel, "Differential Responses to Projective Testing in a Negro Peasant Community: Montserrat, B. W. I.," International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 4 nos. 3 and 4 (1960), 218-24.

- 17 Abel and Métraux, "Normal and Deviant ... " p. 167.
- 18 Oberholzer, pp. 588-640.
- 19 Theodora M. Abel, "The Rorschach Test in the Study of Culture," Rorschach Research Exchange, 12 (1948), 79-93.
- 20 Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934).
- 21 Abel, "The Rorschach Test ... " p. 13.
- 22 Herman Lantz, "Rorschach Testing in Pre-Literature Cultures," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 13 (1948), 287-96.
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- 24 M. and R. Bleuler, "Rorschach's Inkblot Test and Racial Psychology," Character and Personality 4 (1935), 97-114.
- 25 Aristotle, Politics, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford, 1885).
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- 28 Klineberg, p. 345.
- 29 M. F. Ashley-Montagu, Man's Most Dangerous Myth 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952); M.F.



Ashley-Montagu, The Concept of Race (New York: Free Press, 1964); Carleton S. Coon, The Living Races of Man (New York: Knopf, 1965); Carleton S. Coon, The Origin of Races (New York: Knopf, 1962).

<sup>30</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "National Differences and Preferences in Beliefs," Journal of Comparative Psychology, 3 (1925), 413-30.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret Floy Washburn, "A Questionary Study of Certain National Differences in Emotional Traits," Journal of Comparative Psychology, 3 (1923), 413-30.

<sup>32</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "National Differences ... " p. 40-41.

<sup>33</sup> Ralph Linton, pp. 148-49.

<sup>34</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Francis L. K. Hsu, "Some Aspects of Personality of Chinese as Revealed by the Rorschach Test," Journal of Projective Techniques 13 no. 3 (1949), 285-301. Dr. Hsu's reservations are at conclusion of the article.

<sup>35</sup> Georgene Seward, Psychotherapy and Culture Conflict (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1956), p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> Geoffrey Gorer, "The Concept of National Character," Science News no. 18 (1950), 105-22.

<sup>37</sup> Abel and Hsu, "Some Aspects ..." p. 301.

<sup>38</sup> Bert Kaplan, Studying Personality Cross-Culturally (New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1961), p. 608; Gardner Lindzey, Projective Techniques and Cross-Cultural Research (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961), p. 239-40; John J. Honigmann, Culture and Personality (New York: Harper and

Row, 1954); George De Vos and Horace Miner, "A Study in Acculturative Stress," and Victor Sanua, "Differences in Personality Adjustment Among Different Generations of American Jews and Non-Jews," in Culture and Mental Health (New York: Macmillan Co., 1959) p. 340 and 455; Henry Smith, Personality and Adjustment (New York: McGraw-Hill Pub. Co., 1961).

<sup>39</sup> Oscar Lewis, Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Revisited (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1951), pp. 306-18.

<sup>40</sup> Oberholzer, pp. 588-640.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Redfield, Tepoztlán--A Mexican Village (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930).

<sup>42</sup> Lindzey, p. 206.

<sup>43</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel 12 April 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Primitive and Child Mentality," Kwartalnik Psychologiczny 5 (1934), 5-21; Margaret Mead, "The Use of Primitive Material in the Study of Personality," Culture and Personality 3 no. 1 (1934), 3-17.

<sup>45</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel, 12 April 1979.

<sup>46</sup> Margaret Mead and Rhoda Métraux, The Study of Culture at a Distance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) preface.

<sup>47</sup> Mead and Métraux, p. 89.

<sup>48</sup> Theodora M. Abel, Jane Bello and Martha Wolfenstein, "An Analysis of French Projective Tests," in Themes in French Culture eds. Margaret Mead and Rhoda Métraux, Hoover Institute Studies (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, April, 1954).

<sup>49</sup> Abel, "The Rorschach Test in ... " p. 1-13.

<sup>50</sup> Mead and Métraux, p. 319.

<sup>51</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Rhoda Metraux, Culture and Psychotherapy (New Haven: College and University Press, 1974), p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> Abel and Métraux, p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> This is only a partial list of the many writers on culture, Alexander Goldenweiser, Anthropology (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1937), p. 59. Abram Kardiner, The Individual and His Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 84-85; Clyde Kluckhohn and O. H. Mower, "Culture and Personality," American Anthropologist 46 no. 1 (1944), 7-8; Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, Culture (Cambridge: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 212-23; Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957).

<sup>54</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "A Study of a Group of Subnormal Girls Successfully Adjusted in Industry and the Community," American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 45 no. 1 (1940), 3-26.

<sup>55</sup> For example, see Cornelius Osgood, "Cognitive

Dynamics in Human Affairs," Public Opinion Quarterly 24 (1960), 341-65; L. Festinger, "Cognitive Dissonance," Scientific American, 207 (1962), 93-102.

<sup>56</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Elaine F. Kinder, The Sub-normal Adolescent Girl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

<sup>57</sup> Among the many reviews, see, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 13 no. 1 (1943), reviewer, Margaret Wilson; Journal of Criminal Psychopathology January (1943).reviewer, Chester Owens; Social Research May (1943) reviewer, Erwin Levy; Psychiatry June (1944) reviewer, F. F. Ashley-Montagu; American Journal of Psychiatry November (1943) reviewer, Fredick Allen.

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Mead, Pref., Culture and Psychotherapy, by Theodora M. Abel and Rhoda Métraux (New Haven: College and University Press, 1974), i-v.

Men and women live in culture through a series of mediations; they rarely confront society, the economy, politics directly. Habitually they engage in activities that in all ways relate to, and in many ways mirror, the larger world of beliefs and commands. One of these worlds, decisive for most, is that of work: the technological, pedagogic, legal situation in which men and women wrest their livelihood from the soil, the loom or the typewriter. It is a world contiguous with the world of habits, of training and customary performance, canons of excellence, and the clashes of schools and techniques that make up so much of the shop talk among mechanics and sculptors, farmers and psychoanalysts.

--Peter Gay. Art and Act

Chapter Three  
Professional Choice:  
Transitions Within the Discipline

*Dr. Abel's transition to clinical psychology from applied psychology reflects a major trend evident within the field of psychology in the late 1940s. Abel's publications in clinical psychology, which revealed her involvement with both psychoanalysis and family therapy, continue to examine forms of cultural diversity. Abel's skill as a clinician permitted her to begin her work as a teacher of these methods.*

Dr. Theodora M. Abel's interest in culture, in the various ways in which cultures express themselves and how culture influences psychological thought, is an underlying current in her published expression. This can be witnessed in her published work with mental defectives, the facially disfigured, psychoanalytic theory and family therapy. Dr. Abel's transition from applied to clinical psychology was a gradual process, the beginnings of which can be traced to earlier phases of her career. Abel's numerous publications reveal her commitment to her profession and her position as a

representative member of applied and clinical psychology.

In 1940, Dr. Abel secured a position at Letchworth Village, a State school in New York whose patients had all been committed by the State courts. At this time, there were roughly 4000 patients living in the institution with over 700 additional patients living outside the institution. It was while employed here as the Research Psychologist, later as the Senior Psychologist, that Dr. Abel began her use of projective techniques. Abel's experience with mental defectives had begun several years earlier when she was Director of Research of the Manhattan Trade School for Girls.<sup>1</sup>

The clinical psychologist has typically ignored the study of mental defectives even though the profession itself evolved from the study of the mentally defective child.<sup>2</sup> The characterization of mental deficiency is not a simple task since there is no common factor involved in this classification.<sup>3</sup> The task of the clinical psychologist does not terminate with mere classification of deficiency; what is crucial for the mental defective is eventual emancipation. However, this emancipation is obviously not for the grossly retarded but only for the less severely retarded individual. Dr. Abel utilized her skills as an applied psychologist to investigate the successfully adjusted subnormal adolescent. Dr. Abel concluded that

... many subnormal girls, 55 percent of the group studied, were capable of successful and steady employment in industry. Many factors contributed to this success. The more important of these factors were:

1. A stable home in which the girl is not rejected to any marked degree.
2. Ambition and self-respect.
3. Careful placement in a job commensurate with interest, ability and training.
4. Guidance and encouragement and being treated with patience especially during the initial work period.
5. "Luck" in securing an adequate initial job.

If the bridge of success is crossed by the second year, then the subnormal girl has a good chance of becoming a good and steady worker. She continues in her adjustment in the third year as well as in the second, because she is willing to stick to a routine monotonous job and has no aspiration to advance to superior positions ... she feels attached to her place of work and becomes identified with it.

Unfortunately, all of these stabilizing factors are not found among all the subnormals with whom one has to deal. But, that they are found among so many of them shows us that subnormal girls need not necessarily be liabilities, but can take their place in industry and the community as can girls of higher levels of intelligence.<sup>4</sup>

Abel's conclusion was that in considering the psychological differences of the mental defective, cultural as well as psychological factors must also be discussed.<sup>5</sup>

While the vocational possibilities of the defective are limited, it was shown that they are employable in certain circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

Several studies illustrate Dr. Abel's application of projective techniques to the understanding of the mentally defective.<sup>7</sup> In the institutional setting, she found



educational programs are carefully administered at the level of the subnormal. Even with this careful administration, some of these subnormals fail in their academic work, similar to the happenings in the normal school setting. These failures are not due to low mental ability or the difficulty of the academic subject.

As was shown in Chapter Two of this study, Dr. Abel extensively utilized the Rorschach in her psychological studies. The widest usage of the Rorschach is in the study of the mental defective, not in determining intelligence but in the estimation of the level of mental deficiency.<sup>8</sup> The Rorschach offers more to the clinician for the understanding of the dynamics of the individual than does the limited information from the intelligence quotient tests.<sup>9</sup> The results of Abel's studies revealed the group that succeeded in school was "more homogeneous in its responses to the ink-blot while the lower educational group is less homogeneous and more variable in the type of response different members of the group make."<sup>10</sup> Her major finding was that the lower educational group did not have more cases of brain injury and physical handicaps as originally suspected. She concluded:

These individuals need a type of education more suited to their particular needs, more arts and crafts, more training in muscular control, more chance for free play, greater individual work in case of special handicaps, and much less emphasis on learning standard

academic subjects such as reading and writing even though this material is gauged for the 'average' individual of retarded mental development.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Abel was beginning to be impressed by the methods of the clinical psychologist. Other circumstances, however, were to take place before she made her transition (as we shall see later in this chapter).

The institution permitted a controlled setting for the examination of racial differences in behavior and performance. Dr. Abel utilized the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) to examine these differences in behavior performance in the institution.<sup>12</sup>

The results revealed that Negro girls gave more flexible and detailed responses to the Rorschach than the white girls; the former also gave more detail in the stories elicited by the TAT. White girls were more submissive and less aggressive than the Negro girls. The differences between Negro boys and white boys were not as marked as the differences between Negro girls and white girls. The differences, Dr. Abel concluded, were due to different cultural expectations of the roles of boys and girls.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Abel's application of her research findings guided her towards another path in psychology, that of the clinician. While employed at Letchworth Village, Dr. Abel was informed of an infant who had been diagnosed as grossly retarded. She discovered that the infant was isolated and the

diagnosis was in error. The infant was blind and was thought to be deaf and unresponsive. One of the staff members would periodically visit the unit and play with this child. Soon, the infant would recognize the sounds of this particular staff member and make certain calling sounds. When told of this, Dr. Abel contacted the appropriate people working with the blind and active measures were taken to accommodate this child. The child was determined to be of normal intelligence and blindness was the only abnormal factor. This occasion began Dr. Abel's second transition within her profession, from applied psychology to clinical psychology. Abel terminated her employment with Letchworth Village in 1946, shortly after this incident though she remained as a consultant, and sought the means to move into clinical work.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Abel's concern in the active intervention with mental defectives is evidenced in a later work published in 1953.<sup>15</sup> Psychotherapy is largely based on the verbalization by the patient. However, since the mental defective's ability to communicate is often limited, few clinical psychologists have considered therapy with the mental defective to be effective. Psychotherapy with the mental defective is not only time consuming but often results in little progress. For these reasons, few clinical psychologists have been interested in this field of practice. Nevertheless, psychotherapy with mental defectives can

often result in positive treatment.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Abel stated that

... it is my feeling that if one can enjoy the individuals one works with, have some simple goals, flexible techniques, then the therapeutic results with mental retardates may be not less effective and not more difficult to bring about than they are with more intelligent individuals; in fact, they may be often more adequate and surprisingly easy to elicit.<sup>17</sup>

Abel's suggestion that the openness of the psychotherapist was an important ingredient in psychotherapy with the mental defective was confirmed in a later independent study.<sup>18</sup> The opportunity for the retardate to identify with the therapist permits a perception of safety and increases the possibility of the retardate's grasp of reality.

The war years of the 1940s and the period immediately after World War II marked the beginning of a new period for clinical psychology. There were large numbers of emotionally damaged soldiers in the military and many thousands who were discharged who required the services of the clinician. Almost immediately, the profession of clinical psychology felt the strains of the demands for its members. Few academic psychologists had supported clinical psychology until the war and postwar years.<sup>19</sup> The Veterans Administration was reorganized and positions were established that offered training to graduate

students in psychology. Methods were needed which would effectively deal with the emotional problems of the many people who required the tools of the clinical psychologist. The American Psychological Association appointed a committee to investigate the required training standards of the clinician and subsequent conferences have kept the standards current.<sup>20</sup> Training programs were also established for those who worked in the mental health field and were no longer in the university setting. Professional qualifications of the clinical psychologist were first standardized after the end of World War II, thereby firmly establishing the profession of clinical psychology.<sup>21</sup>

In July, 1945, Lewis Wolberg, M.D. and Arlene Wolberg, M.S.W., founded the Postgraduate Center for Psychotherapy in New York City.<sup>22</sup> This Center was created to meet the needs of those requiring help because of emotional problems who could not afford the cost of private psychologists or psychiatrists. In November, 1948, a training program was started at the Center, "to supply increasing numbers of trained psychiatric teams to organize and operate clinics at the community level."<sup>23</sup> In 1947, an associate of Dr. Abel's suggested that she meet Dr. Wolberg. At their meeting, Dr. Wolberg asked Dr. Abel when she would be free to begin work at the Center. At that time, Abel was involved with the study on Contemporary Cultures with Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict but did agree to begin work

at the Center. Dr. Abel began her association with the Center in 1947 and ended this association with her retirement in 1971. She held many important positions while employed at the Center: Director of Psychology, Senior Supervisor, and Training Analyst. As we shall see, her published work during this period demonstrates the variety of her interest.

The large number of war casualties, increasing civilian accidents, our own culture's stress on beauty and the state of the art of plastic surgery, prompted studies of facial disfigurement. The studies to be discussed were conducted by an interdisciplinary team during 1949-1951.<sup>24</sup> These studies examined the psycho-social and psychiatric problems encountered by the facially disfigured. The complexities of disfigurement entail the understanding of the intertwined attitudes of society, family and self.<sup>25</sup> In one study, Dr. Abel examined the Rorschach responses of those requesting corrective surgery.<sup>26</sup> While disfigurement ranged from mild to severe, the feelings attributed to each degree of disfigurement were similar.<sup>27</sup> Each stated a dissatisfaction with living and felt that they were discriminated against in employment or social situations. The Rorschach was administered to investigate the possibility of distinguishing the mildly from the severely disfigured. The results of the study indicated that, while both mildly and severely disfigured repress their fantasies, " ... there

seems to be some tendency for differentiation, for the severely disfigured to exert better control over their feelings than the mildly disfigured and to be better able to resort to more successful defense mechanisms."<sup>28</sup>

This indicated that the severely disfigured are more accepting of themselves than the mildly disfigured and do not tend to use the facial disfigurement as a focal point of their problems.<sup>29</sup>

While the rehabilitation of the facially disfigured is similar to the rehabilitation of other handicapped individuals, the location of the disfigurement does create some specific problems. The patients requesting corrective surgery must be carefully screened. The results of the surgery may be functional correction as well as cosmetic. With functional improvement, such as in the case where breathing, eating and talking are improved, rehabilitation is more rapid. By way of example, Dr. Abel stated:

Often the effects of plastic surgery upon patients has not necessarily been commensurate with esthetic results while others are only partially satisfied. Some individuals may even be dissatisfied and greatly discouraged by what they feel has been unnecessary pain, expense and time spent. Some patients are greatly pleased with only minor improvements. Generally speaking, the complainers, those who feel their faces are the source of all their difficulties in interpersonal relationships, are the most likely to be displeased with operative results. Noncomplainers are likely to be more satisfied. ... patients who believe that as soon as there has been cosmetic improvement they will feel much

better in daily living and towards others, are likely to be disappointed. They are little aware of the fact that it takes more than an external change in facial appearance to bring about changed feelings about themselves and about their feelings of others toward them.<sup>30</sup>

These writings reflect a continued concern for the individual and the methods employed in not only dealing with the individual, but in the culture as a whole.<sup>31</sup>

Dr. Abel's application of cultural investigation has already been noted (Chapter II of this study). The interdisciplinary methodology employed in these studies reveals Abel's concern for a wider scientific approach in psychological investigation.

In 1949, Dr. Abel began her formal involvement in psychoanalysis and later underwent her own personal analysis. Up to this time, she had never formally utilized psychoanalytic techniques (see Chapter I, this study). There is evidence of some psychoanalytic concepts in her writings, the earliest of which discussed Piaget's concepts of thinking when applied to adults. She alluded in this 1932 study to the psychoanalytic concept of regression. In her conclusion, Dr. Abel stated:

We feel, therefore, that a more adequate conclusion, and one which would hold true for children and adults of different degrees of maturity, of experience, and of cultural background, would be, that for every normal individual (exclusive of the physically diseased, the mentally pathological and the emotionally



unbalanced) there is some compulsory stimulus-situation, requiring coherent or 'logical' thought, which will reveal his limitations of memory, of understanding, of means of communication, through verbal exchange; and which will force him into the use of unsynthetic or 'prelogical' modes of thought.<sup>32</sup>

As was shown in Chapter I of this study, Dr. Abel was also influenced by gestalt psychology. Lewin stated that his theories were not counter to psychoanalysis and there were also some parallels to the Freudian theory of repression.<sup>33</sup> While attending courses at the New School for Social Research in 1936-1937, Dr. Abel was also exposed to psychoanalytic theory from the teaching of Karen Horney. Horney's stress on the dynamic influences of cultural and social factors in her theory of personality increased Abel's susceptibility to this major transition in her psychological approach.

By the late 1940s, psychoanalysis had become firmly ingrained as a legitimate psychology and was adopted by many medical schools as an integral part in the training of psychiatrists.<sup>34</sup> In 1946, the American Psychoanalytic Association, which controlled the focus of psychoanalytic theory and the requirements for training as an analyst, was reorganized. Generally, only physicians with adequate training were accepted into the training institutes governed by the Association. The controversy over the training of lay analysts and the number of hours required in personal analysis remains.<sup>35</sup> Training institutes had

been established which sought to eliminate questionable students and to establish professional standards among analysts. This standardization entailed a lengthy personal analysis and a set number of required courses in psychoanalytic theory. In 1948, the Advanced Training Program in Psychoanalysis was begun at the Postgraduate Center in New York City. Psychoanalytic psychotherapy has since been a central core of its teaching and therapy. Dr. Abel began her personal analysis in 1952 and underwent analysis three times a week until 1956.

The selection of candidates for training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy is a difficult process.<sup>36</sup> At one time, the analyst was self-selected. The interested student sought out a psychoanalyst and began his own psychoanalysis. The acceptance by the analyst was the only criterion for the selection of the candidate. With the standardization of acceptability of candidates, the organization of psychoanalytic institutes and the demand for psychoanalysis, the selection of professionals became difficult. The process of this selection was examined at the Postgraduate Center. Candidates selected to be trained at the Center were either psychiatrists, clinical psychologists or social workers and, at the time of the study, were undergoing a personal analysis. Personal interviews were conducted and projective tests were administered as a method for selection. Dr. Abel

stated that the criteria utilized for selection were

... to structure the interview, however, so as to be able to find out and evaluate in some detail qualifications which are of concern to us, and which, for convenience, may be placed into the four following categories: 1. qualitative aspects of training and experience; 2. cultural aspects of personality; 3. psychological aspects of personality; and, 4. modes of interpersonal relationships....

Our purpose in utilizing the Rorschach examination as one of the initial screening procedures was twofold: to help screen out individuals with serious psychopathology, and to aid in predicting the effectiveness of a candidate as a future psychotherapist. The first step required was to make a tentative formulation of the kind of personality we thought most likely would make a proficient therapist. ... A second step to be taken by the psychologist was to translate this picture of an ideal psychotherapist into terms of Rorschach evaluation.

A desirable therapist personality was considered to be one who showed marked interest in interpersonal relationships and who had capacity for identification with a variety of roles or styles of life on the one hand, but who had a balancing degree of detachment and objectivity on the other.<sup>37</sup>

The qualitative evaluations made by the interviewer were considered to be an important factor in the selection process of the candidate for psychoanalytic training. Dr. Abel expressed her reluctance to simply rely on quantitative examinations as the sole selective criteria when she stated that

... if this were done, we feel one would lose sight of the very essence of an evaluation; that is, the reaction to the individual applicant himself, as a person and as a potential therapist.<sup>38</sup>

In Dr. Abel's published writings, continued interest in culture can be seen being utilized in a psychoanalytic context. While culture and personality studies had been in existence since the 1920s, little information was available on the interplay between culture and psychoanalysis. The training of the psychoanalyst or psychotherapist typically emphasizes the assessment of the patient's mental health and the relief of emotional distress. Knowledge of the cultural factors is important for psychoanalysis and psychotherapy to be effectively continued.<sup>39</sup> It is important for the psychoanalyst and psychotherapist to be aware of cultural patterns and the complex cultural variables as they may appear in their patients. Dr. Abel was aware of this when she stated that

... it seems to me a great deal of research has to go into investigating the effects of cultural and social patterning and acculturation on our patients and in ourselves before we can gain a greater appreciation of the subtle influences that taboos, introjections, projections, culturally acceptable defenses, and other modes of behavior have on transferences, counter-transferences, resistance, latent communication and on the total therapeutic process.<sup>40</sup>

In another study on the effects of culture on psychotherapeutic techniques, Dr. Abel suggested ways for therapists to become prepared when working with patients with a similar or dissimilar cultural background.<sup>41</sup> Training in cultural anthropology is necessary to become familiar with the complexities of the culture of the patients. This

familiarity is accomplished by first becoming aware of one's own cultural background. Regardless of the modality of the therapist, awareness of the role culture plays in therapy is crucial to the understanding of the therapeutic process. Dr. Abel adhered to her own suggestions with her intensive work in cultural anthropology, the investigation of American culture and the detailed examination of the culture of her patients. The influence of the specific examination of the Chinese in the Columbia Contemporary Cultures project can be seen in her psychoanalytic writings on a Chinese patient.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Abel's Rorschach analysis of the Tepotzlān Village furthered her depth of knowledge in cultural and cross-cultural investigation. Cross-cultural studies offer a more unified approach to the human predicament and may be a required course of investigation for the future of psychological investigation.<sup>43</sup> Dr. Abel's work with the peasant culture of Montserrat, British West Indies, demonstrates this added value for the profession.<sup>44</sup> Abel's work with Rhoda Métraux resulted in their co-teaching a course at the Postgraduate Center on culture and psychotherapy. This course began after their studies at Montserrat and continued for many years at the Center.

Abel's interest in transcending disciplinary limitations can again be seen in her work in family therapy. Dr. Abel's involvement with family therapy may be viewed

as an extension of her investigations of the complexities of culture. The family is a unit of expression of the larger culture, and is fundamental to the understanding of the individual.<sup>45</sup> Classical psychoanalysis is conducted in a one-to-one setting and concentrates only on the individual patient. The family therapy movement began as an outgrowth of psychoanalysis in the late 1940s and early 1950s as a reaction against this limitation. While writings did appear in psychoanalytic journals concerning family therapy, the movement did not surface until the late 1950s.<sup>46</sup> Family therapy was launched into the national scene by the 1957 American Orthopsychiatric Association, where a panel, headed by John Speigel, presented research ideas on family schizophrenia. Dr. Abel was Secretary of the Association and may have been exposed to this theory.<sup>47</sup>

One of the pioneers of the family therapy movement was Nathan Ackerman, who was also a psychoanalyst.<sup>48</sup> Ackerman was a dominant figure in the family therapy movement until his death in 1971. In 1960, Ackerman founded, in New York City, the Family Institute and worked at the Jewish Family Service, to offer low cost therapeutic services to needy families. Dr. Abel was trained in family therapy by Ackerman in 1965-1966. In 1968, she co-founded, with Asya Kadis and Max Markowitz, the Family Therapy Training Program at the Postgraduate Center and became one of its Co-Direc-

tors, a position she held until her retirement from the Center in 1971. In her discussion of family therapy, Dr. Abel stated:

'There is no such thing as a one person problem.' This statement was made by the late Dr. Nathan Ackerman who taught me the techniques of family therapy a few years ago. A family can be looked at as a system where each part affects the whole.... What family therapy tries to do is first to get a whole family to agree to come together to talk over problems. The therapist works with the family trying to understand their difficulties, getting different family members to talk to each other, and to listen and to try to formulate ways in which they can get along better and cope with the situation. The therapist does not tell the family what to do, but encourages different members to work out ways of improving their relationships with each other. The family does the job, the therapist is the facilitator.<sup>49</sup>

Family therapy provides an opportunity for the therapist to witness the interactions within the family and to observe how the patterns within this group are maintained. The family therapist, by examining the entire family unit and not just one member of that unit, can facilitate change within the family. The family therapist relates to the family as a functional unit and does not isolate any one of its members. In viewing the family as a complete system, the therapist is able to see how the balance within the family is maintained. This balance may be adaptive or dysfunctional. In the adaptive family, a harmonious relationship exists not only within the fam-

ily but in the relationship the different members of the family have with others. The family with dysfunctional balance is one in which at least one family member portrays inappropriate behavior or where continual crisis exists.<sup>50</sup>

Dr. Abel's knowledge of psychoanalytic theory and her involvement in culture studies led to her interest in family therapy.<sup>51</sup> However, Abel's published ideas on family therapy did not appear until after her retirement from the Postgraduate Center in 1971. By that time, Dr. Abel's career in the various fields of psychology had extended almost fifty years. As stated, Abel began as an experimental psychologist, in the early 1920s, schooled at the University of Paris and Columbia University. In her formative years as a psychologist, she was personally influenced by Margaret Washburn, Robert Woodworth and Madison Bentley. Dr. Abel's employment at the Manhattan Trade School for Girls in 1936 permitted her to embark on a study of the field of applied psychology. As an applied psychologist, Dr. Abel began her extensive use of the Rorschach and other projective techniques. In 1948, as a result of her work at Letchworth Village, Abel crossed over into clinical psychology. At this time, her role as a psychologist was twofold: that of a clinician and that of a teacher of clinical skills. Abel's teaching of clinical skills began in 1948 at the Postgraduate Center for Mental



Health in New York City. After undergoing her personal analysis, Dr. Abel became skilled in psychoanalytic theory. Later, she became a Training Analyst at the Center. Throughout her career, the personal influence of Margaret Mead is evidenced; much of Abel's published work entails the investigation of cultural expression. In 1965, Dr. Abel sought training in family therapy, thus increasing her clinical armamentarium. Dr. Abel retired from the Center in 1971 but continues as an active contributing member in the field of psychology.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel  
20 April 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Seymour Saronson, Psychological Problems in Mental Deficiency, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1953), p. 367. For a good history, though somewhat dated, see Robert Haskell, "Mental Deficiency Over a Hundred Years: A Brief Historical Sketch of Trends in this Field," American Journal of Psychiatry, 100 (1944), 107-18.

<sup>3</sup> Saronson, p. 1-24.

<sup>4</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "A Study of a Group of Subnormal Girls Successfully Adjusted in Industry and the Community," American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 45 (July, 1940), 72.

<sup>5</sup> For similar results, see Neal Miller and John Dollard, Social Learning and Imitation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 1; for an in-depth view of the subnormal, see Theodora M. Abel and Elaine Kinder, The Subnormal Adolescent Girl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

<sup>6</sup> Emile Burr, "The Vocational Adjustment of Mental Defectives," Psychological Clinic 20 (1931), 55-63; Abel

and Kinder, p. 75-103; Chauncey McKinley Louttit, Clinical Psychology (New York: Harper, 1947), p. 226-27.

<sup>7</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "The Relationships Between Academic Success and Personality Organization Among Subnormal Girls," American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 50 (1945), 251-56; "The Rorschach Test and School Success Among Mental Defectives," Rorschach Research Exchange, 9 (1945), 105-10.

<sup>8</sup> Bruno Klopfer and David Kelley, The Rorschach Technique (Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Co., 1942), p. 370.

<sup>9</sup> Saronson, p. 224.

<sup>10</sup> Abel, "The Rorschach Test and School . . .," p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Abel, "The Relationship Between . . .," p. 256.

<sup>12</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Negro-White Interpersonal Relationships Among Institutionalized Subnormal Girls," American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 46 no. 3 (1942), 325-39; "Dominant Behavior of Institutionalized Subnormal Negro Girls: An Experimental Study," American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 47 (1943), 429-36; "Response of Negro and White Morons to the Thematic Apperception Test," American Journal of Mental Deficiency 49 (1945), 463-68; Abel et al., "Response of Negro and White Morons to the Rorschach Test," American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 48 (1944), 253-57.

<sup>13</sup> For similar results, see Saronson, p. 18-24.

14 Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel  
23 April 1979.

15 Theodora M. Abel, "Resistances and Difficulties in Psychotherapy of Mental Retardates," Journal of Clinical Psychology, 9 (1953), 107-109

16 For similar findings of Abel's study, see Fredrick Thorne, "Counseling and Psychotherapy with Mental Defectives," American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 52 (1948), 263-71; Saronson, p. 263-330.

17 Abel, "Resistances and Difficulties ... ", p. 109.

18 For example, see Jane W. Kessler, Psychopathology of Childhood (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 191.

19 Sheldon Korchin, Modern Clinical Psychology: Principles of Intervention in Clinic and Community (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1976), p. 45-46.

20 For a good summary of these conferences, see Leonard Blank and Henry David, Sourcebook for Training in Clinical Psychology (New York: Springer Publishing Co., Inc., 1964), p. 2-41.

21 Robert I. Watson, "A Brief History of Clinical Psychology," Psychological Bulletin, 50 (1953), 321-46.

22 The name of this Center was later changed to the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health.

23 Lucy Freeman, "Psychiatric Unity Called Vital Now," New York Times, 17 October 1948, p. 60.

<sup>24</sup> The members of this interdisciplinary team were: Albert Bryt, psychiatrist; John M. Converse, plastic surgeon; Edith Lauer, home interviewer; Frances Macgregor, sociologist; Serena Weissmann and Theodora M. Abel, psychologists.

<sup>25</sup> Eugene Meyer, "Psychiatric Aspects of Plastic Surgery," in Reconstructive Plastic Surgery: Principles and Procedures in Correction, Reconstruction and Transplantation, ed. John Converse (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1967), p. 365-83.

<sup>26</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Serena Weissmann, "Psychological Aspects of Facial Disfigurement: A Rorschach Study," Rorschachiana, International Review of Rorschach and Other Projective Techniques, 1 no. 2 (1952), 152-58.

<sup>27</sup> For classification of the variety of disfigurement, see Theodora M. Abel, "Facial Disfigurement," in Psychological Aspects of Physical Disability by Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1954), p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> Abel and Weissman, "Psychological Aspects . . .," p. 157.

<sup>29</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Personality Characteristics of the Facially Disfigured," Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences, 14 no. 8 (1952), 325-28.

<sup>30</sup> Abel, "Facial Disfigurement," p. 120.

<sup>31</sup> Theodora M. Abel was Chairman of the Preparatory Commission of the World Federation for Mental Health. The result of this Commission led to, "Prophylactic Aspects of the Mental Health of the Physically Disabled," Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Occupational Medicine, 5 (April, 1952), 389-94.

<sup>32</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Unsynthetic Modes of Thinking Among Adults: A Discussion of Piaget's Concepts," American Journal of Psychology, 44 (1932), 132.

<sup>33</sup> Kurt Lewin, "Vectors, Cognitive Process, and Mr. Tolman's Criticism," Journal of General Psychology, 8 no. 2 (April, 1933), 318-45; "Psychoanalysis and Topological Psychology," Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic, 1 (1937), 202; Saul Rosenzweig, "The Recall of Finished and Unfinished Tasks as Affected by the Purpose with which they were Performed," Psychological Bulletin, 30 (1933), 698.

<sup>34</sup> C[la]r[en]c[e] P[au]l Oberndorf, A History of Psychoanalysis in America (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1953), p. 207.

<sup>35</sup> For an example of the controversy, see C. Herbert Mower, "Training in Psychotherapy," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 15 (1951), 274-77; Ernst Federn, "How Freudian are the Freudians? Some Remarks to an Unpublished Letter," Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 3 no. 3 (July, 1967), 269-81; Oberndorf, p. 209.

<sup>36</sup> Theodora M. Abel et al., "Screening Applicants for Training in Psychoanalytically Oriented Psychotherapy," American Journal of Psychotherapy, 10 no. 1 (1956), 24-39.

<sup>37</sup> Abel, "Screening Applicants . . .," p. 26-28.

<sup>38</sup> Abel, "Screening Applicants . . .," p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see Marvin Opler, "Cultural Perspectives in Mental Health Research," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 25 (1955), 51-9; Harry Savitz, "The Cultural Background of the Patient as Part of the Physician's Armamentarium," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 47 (1952), 245-54; S. Chess et al., "The Importance of Cultural Evaluation in Psychiatric Diagnosis and Treatment," Psychiatric Quarterly, 27 (1953), 102-14; George Devereux, "The Cultural Factors in Psychoanalytic Therapy," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 1 no. 4 (1953), 629-55.

<sup>40</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Cultural Contexts and Psychotherapy," New Directions in Mental Health, 15 (1968), 260-67.

<sup>41</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Cultural Patterns as They Affect Psychotherapeutic Procedures," American Journal of Psychotherapy, 10 no. 4 (October, 1956), 738

<sup>42</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "The Dreams of a Chinese Patient," The Psychoanalytic Study of Society, 2 (1962), 280-309.

<sup>43</sup> Gardner Murphy, "Psychology in the Year 2000," American Psychologist, 24 (1969), 523-30.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter II, this study; also see Theodora M. Abel, "Mental Health and Crosscultural Evaluations," International Mental Health Newsletter, 4 nos. 3&4 (Fall-Winter, 1962), 1-5.

<sup>45</sup> For example, see Jules Henry, Culture Against Man (New York: Knopf, 1963), p. 238.

<sup>46</sup> Murray Bowen, "Family Therapy and Family Group Therapy," in Comprehensive Group Psychotherapy, eds. Harold Kaplan and Benjamin Sadock (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Co., 1971), p. 384-421.

<sup>47</sup> Theodora M. Abel was secretary to the American Orthopsychiatric Association during this period.

<sup>48</sup> Philip Guerin, "Family Therapy: The First Twenty-Five Years," in Family Therapy: Theory and Practice, ed. Philip Guerin (New York: Gardner Press, Inc., 1976), p. 2-22.

<sup>49</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Family Therapy--My Latest Venture," The Chapin School Alumnae Bulletin, (1975), p. 9-13.

<sup>50</sup> For example, see Murray Bowen, "Theory in the Practice of Psychotherapy," in Family Therapy: Theory and Practice, ed. Philip Guerin (New York: Gardner Press, Inc., 1976), p. 42-91.



51 Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel,  
20 April 1979.

Complex ideas may, perhaps, be well known by definition, which is nothing but an enumeration of those parts or simple ideas, that compose them. But when we have pushed up definitions to the most simple ideas, and find still some ambiguity and obscurity; what resource are we then possessed of? By what invention can we throw light upon these ideas, and render them altogether precise and determinate to our intellectual view? Produce the impressions or original sentiments, from which the ideas are copied. These impressions are all strong and sensible. They admit not of ambiguity. They are not only placed in a full light themselves, but may throw light on their correspondent ideas which lie in obscurity.

--David Hume. Concerning Human Understanding

Through his culture man learns to relate himself to society and, by storing up past knowledge in symbolic form, he can visualize future possibilities and consciously adapt himself through reason.

--Richard Courtney. Play, Drama & Thought

## Chapter Four

### Cumulative Efforts:

#### Influence of Culture on Testing and Psychotherapy

*Dr. Abel's publications throughout the 1950s and 1960s continue to exemplify her long-standing commitment to psychology. Abel's dedication to her chosen profession is seen in two cumulative publications that demonstrate the refinement of her ideas on testing in cultural contexts and the influence of culture on psychotherapy. Abel's contributions to psychoanalysis and family therapy enable her to publish authoritatively in ways which are winning her international recognition.*

Dr. Abel has continued to demonstrate her dedication to psychological studies in her published ideas on psychoanalytic theory, in her studies on the influence of cultural variations on the individual, and in the ways in which she has utilized family therapy techniques.

In 1971, Dr. Abel retired from the Postgraduate Center and relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico. She became Chief of the Family Therapy Program at the Child Guidance Center, Clinical Associate in the Department of Psy-

chiatry (Clinical Professor in 1979) at the University of New Mexico, and established a private practice. Her continued interest in culture studies, psychoanalytic theory and family therapy is evidenced by her ongoing published ideas.

Dr. Abel is convinced of the importance of working with the entire family as a therapeutic technique, as seen by her diverse approach to family therapy. One of the simplest views in family therapy is the consideration of the family as a system that has reached equilibrium.<sup>1</sup> With a change in one family member, other family members react to restore this sought-for equilibrium. This systems approach is similar to the Gestalt psychologists' statement that the whole is greater than the parts that make up the whole.<sup>2</sup> Oftentimes, therapy is sought for a member of a family who is hospitalized at a mental health center. The realities of time and money require that the family therapy be brief. In one study, Dr. Abel described her approach to brief family therapy with families of a hospitalized member.<sup>3</sup> The family was seen while the patient was hospitalized and also after his discharge. By presenting a case study, Abel demonstrated her specific approach and offered two situations where brief family therapy is not recommended:

The first is that in which the identified patient interacts in a psychotic fashion and communicates principally through the use of silence.... The second situation is one in

which there is a large family with many serious problems and little motivation for change.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Abel demonstrated her approach to brief family therapy at Hiroshima University in 1974 and, again, in 1977.<sup>5</sup> By 1978, Abel had published an article in Japan outlining the various family theorists who had influenced her work, her employment of psychoanalytic techniques in relation to family therapy, and the role culture may play in family therapy. Abel's reputation as a clinician enabled her to introduce family therapy to Iran, in October, 1978. She was invited to teach family therapy at Pahlavi University in Shiraz. Dr. Abel concluded her month-long teaching shortly before the political unrest concerning the Shah. An indication of the influence of culture on family therapy is evident in her report:

Given the Islamic position of the authoritarian father and also the conditions in Iran at the time family therapy was carried on (protests against the Shah and a good deal of violence, with great emphasis on the part of the mullahs [priests] of reverting to tradition), I was surprised and pleased how some families were able to interrelate and communicate their feelings to each other, especially to the father whom they had perceived as distant and unapproachable.<sup>6</sup>

Multiple family therapy has its origins in a mental health clinic.<sup>7</sup> In a systems approach, each family is viewed as a subsystem with each member of the group related to the system. Dr. Abel devised a method for exploration in multi-family therapy to examine the roles each

member portrays.<sup>8</sup> This technique consists of determining who is the Designated Power Figure (DPF) and the Real Power Figure (RPF). The DPF and the RPF may be the same individual. Determination is also made of the members who are seen as positive or negative and who represent the scapegoat. Abel utilized this mapping method for her investigation of the use of family therapy for the spinal cord injured.<sup>9</sup> As was stated earlier (Chapter III, this study), the rehabilitation of the disabled is a complex process. Abel used her skills as a family therapist and her experience in working with the disabled to investigate the spinal cord injured in a family setting. The purpose of this investigation was to see the various ways a traumatic injury affects the family system, what shifts are made in its delicate balance, and the role the therapists may take for resolution of inevitable conflict. The rehabilitation of the disabled is complex and the family plays an uncertain role in the therapeutic results.<sup>10</sup> Brief family therapy was conducted with five families in the hospital with an overall positive result. However, since family therapy was not a program in force at the hospital, a definite routine of therapy was difficult. Abel concluded that

... family therapy could have been much more effective if it had been part of the regular routine procedures in the hospital, for then the sessions could have begun earlier and have

been more consistent, with regular times set aside.<sup>11</sup>

Family therapy has its roots in psychoanalytic theory, although few family therapists recognize its origin. Rather, they state the differences between family therapy and psychoanalytic theory.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Abel recognized the many similarities that exist between the two approaches in stating that

... both are parts of systems theory, both include family systems and sub-systems, therapists and patient or patients' systems and sub-systems. However, each emphasizes strongly one aspect: the intrapsychic in the one case, the interpersonal in the other. Neither can lose sight of the aspects of the systems or subsystems he is keeping in abeyance.<sup>13</sup>

Abel's conviction of the utility of family therapy does not indicate her abandonment of psychoanalytic theory. Rather, she firmly believes in the importance of understanding psychoanalytic theory as a foundation for family therapists.<sup>14</sup> Concurrent with her publications in family therapy, Abel published works utilizing psychoanalytic theory. One such publication was her detailed psychoanalytic examination of the writings of Yukio Mishima, a Japanese author.<sup>15</sup> By using only the published writings of Mishima and certain biographical material, Abel offered a psychoanalytic interpretation which revealed that Mishima presented " ... both preoedipal and oedipal conflicts, reflected aggressive

and libidinal drives that were frequently fused."<sup>16</sup>

In stating who has influenced her current thinking in psychoanalytic theory, Dr. Abel reflected:

... I have been most interested in and influenced by Roy Schafer's ideas on using action terms rather than terms employed by Freud which were taken over actually from the physical sciences... Roy Schafer's ideas are in some ways very similar to those of Madison Bentley who wrote a book in the early thirties on The Function of Psychology.<sup>17</sup>

Two cumulative studies dealing with psychology and the influence of culture were written by Dr. Abel and were published in the early 1970s. An examination of these books, Psychological Testing in Cultural Contexts and Culture and Psychotherapy (co-authored by Dr. Rhoda Métraux), revealed the integrative nature of Abel's contributions to psychology and related disciplines.

The controversy over whether a psychological test was culture-free or culture-biased had its origins in World War I. Mass numbers of civilians were examined to determine their fitness for recruitment into the service; this was the origin of the Army Alpha and Beta tests.<sup>18</sup> Although the original Alpha and Beta tests were discontinued in the 1920s, knowledge of the limitations of these and other tests resulted in little change until the 1950s.<sup>19</sup> Only with the increased understanding of the variety of cultural differences was any appreciable change made in the format of the various psychological tests. In Psychological



Testing in Cultural Contexts, Dr. Abel drew upon her knowledge of culture to discuss the various problems associated with objective tests, and she drew upon her experience in the usage of projective techniques in their application to cross-cultural testing.<sup>20</sup>

By tracing the history of objective tests, Dr. Abel revealed that clinical psychologists have been aware of the cultural limitations of objective tests since the beginning of such testing. Translating the test into the language of the subject is not enough. Dr. Abel pointed out that

In the French adaptation of the WISC one comprehension problem requires the child to say something about what he would do if he was stuck on a railroad track and a train approached. On the Island of Martinique, a possession of France in the Caribbean, quite a few children have seen pictures of trains in schools and perhaps in the movies, but many youngsters have not. These children would better understand the approach of a car on a road for this is an everyday experience for them.<sup>21</sup>

A psychological test can be regarded as a measure of culture; without a frame of reference, the test would not exist. While there may be standardization in administration and interpretation, Abel suggested that certain questions within the test be adapted to the particular culture. This requires that the clinical psychologist be aware of the complexities that exist within the culture examined. Cross-cultural comparisons can be made only after adaptations are

made to accommodate cultural differences.

Objective tests are a measure of intelligence. For a more complete understanding of the personality of the individual, projective techniques are utilized. The emphasis of Psychological Testing is on projective techniques with the acknowledgement that intelligence tests also pose the same problems. Dr. Abel drew upon her intensive utilization of the various projective techniques in this culture and other cultures to point out the problems associated with their usage in culture studies. In her studies and the corroborative efforts of other researchers, Abel offered suggestions for the usage of the Rorschach, TAT and various other projective techniques in cultural and cross-cultural studies.<sup>22</sup> She recommended that the clinical psychologist be aware of the many variables that are present in the testing situation and the one variable most overlooked is the influence of culture. Not only is knowledge of the particular testing instrument needed, but awareness of the many subtleties within the culture is required for a true interpretation. Dr. Abel penetratingly illustrated the reality of the influence of culture and the difficulty in personality assessment in cross-cultural investigation. She suggested an adaptation of the testing material to accommodate the conditions of the culture examined:

An awareness of the possible influence of cultural patterning in test responses will help

the clinical psychologist to understand what goes on in a testing situation, how the test or testees respond to him and to the test material, and how he responds to the subject or subjects whom he is examining. The clinical psychologist is himself a member of a culture so that he must continually be sensitive to what is going on when he works with a subject from a different culture or a different version of his own culture. He must be sensitive to his own prejudices and be alert for possible culture shocks he may receive when dealing with a subject who appears strange or alien to him.<sup>23</sup>

In Culture and Psychotherapy, the theme is culture and its impact on psychotherapy. The orientation of the book is psychoanalytic and the study offers a discussion of the various approaches of psychoanalytic theory in relation to culture. Abel and Métraux drew upon their extensive research in culture and reviewed the literature on the process of enculturation to portray the patterning of culture upon the individual. They also examined the difficulty in the relationship between culture and psychopathology, and the problems associated with cross-cultural studies in psychopathology. The initial interview between clinical psychologist and client is very important. Typically, the fact of cultural differences is often overlooked and, as Abel and Métraux pointed out,

... the culture in which the subject was reared and the way in which his cultural expectations influence his understanding of the interview, his attitudes toward the interviewer, the way he responds, what he feels is expected of him, and how he chooses (consciously or unconsciously) to phrase what he has to say... what he

reveals or conceals is determined not only by his own personal style but also by regularities in the cultural patterning of thought, feeling, and behavior in the group to which he belongs.<sup>24</sup>

The varieties in cultural expression of psychopathology are related to the attitudes toward treatment in various cultures and socioeconomic groups. The cultural background of the client may play an important role in his selection of a therapist. While the background of the therapist is not a crucial issue in therapy, Abel and Métraux stated:

Therapists themselves have goals for therapy and feelings about their own ability and their role in relation to different kinds of patients. They, too, are influenced--to a great extent unconsciously--by value systems that stem from their cultural background as well as by their conscious, learned attitudes about the nature of psychotherapy and the meaning of a working relationship.<sup>25</sup>

Cultural variability is witnessed in the verbal and non-verbal communication expressed by the client and may cause difficulties in the initial stages of therapy. Utilizing her knowledge of psychoanalytic theory, Dr. Abel discussed the effect of culture on transference, countertransference and dreams. The book concludes with suggestions to the mental health community to recognize the diversity of culture, the decrease in separation of cultural groups, and the problems in the various socioeconomic settings.

Psychological Testing in Cultural Contexts and Culture

and Psychotherapy drew upon representative literature and the extensive experiences of the authors to delineate the influence of culture on psychological testing and psychotherapy. In each approach, the variety of problems encountered were discussed with appropriate suggestions for resolution.

Dr. Abel's unconventional approach to psychoanalysis allowed her to surpass the limitations of this discipline by integrating psychoanalysis not only into her clinical work but also into family therapy. Abel's dedication to the profession of psychology is demonstrated by her continuing publications. Dr. Abel's writings reveal her panoramic interest in clinical psychology and psychology's relation to the varieties of cultural expression.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Don Jackson and John Weakland, "Conjoint Family Therapy, Some Considerations on Theory, Technique and Results," Psychiatry, 31 (1968), 126-37.

<sup>2</sup> Edwin Boring, A History of Experimental Psychology (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 588-93.

<sup>3</sup> Theodora M. Abel, Dominic Bruzzese and Joyce Wilson, "Short-Term Family Therapy for Short-Term Hospitalized Patients: A Vehicle for Training as Well as Treatment," in Group Therapy 1974, eds. Lewis Wolberg and Marvin Aronson (New York: Stratton Intercontinental Medical Book Corp., 1974), p. 80-93; also, see Jane Donner and Anita Gamson, "Experience with Multifamily, Time-Limited Outpatient Groups at a Community Psychiatric Clinic," Psychiatry, 31 (1968), 126-37; Gilbert Weismann et al., "Three-Day Hospitalization--A Model for Intensive Intervention," Archives of General Psychiatry, 21 (1969), 620-29.

<sup>4</sup> Abel, Bruzzese and Wilson, p. 91-2.

<sup>5</sup> Personal interview with Theodora M. Abel, 12 October 1979.

<sup>6</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Introducing Family Therapy in Iran," Transnational Mental Health Research Newsletter, 20 (1978), 1-9.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Laquer, "Mechanisms of Change in Multiple Family Therapy," in Progress in Group and Family Therapy, eds. Clifford Sager and Helen Kaplan (New York: Brunner Mazel, 1972), 400-15.

<sup>8</sup> Theodora M. Abel, David Burke and Joyce Wilson, "Family Mapping and Interfamily Dynamics During the Course of Multiple-Family Therapy," in Group Therapy 1976, eds. Marvin Aronson and Arlene Wolberg (New York: Stratton Intercontinental Medical Book Corp., 1976), p. 87-98. The mapping procedure was Mr. Burke's concept. For another form of family mapping, see Philip Guerin and Eileen Pendagast, "Evaluation of Family System and Genogram," in Family Therapy: Theory and Practice, ed. Philip Guerin (New York: Gardner Press, 1976), pp. 450-64.

<sup>9</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Joyce Wilson, "Spinal Cord Injured and Family Systems: A Pilot Study," in Group Therapy 1979, eds. Lewis Wolberg and Marvin Aronson (New York: Stratton Intercontinental Medical Book Corp., 1979), p. 180-96.

<sup>10</sup> William Fordyce, "Psychology and Rehabilitation," in Rehabilitation and Medicine, ed. Sidney Licht (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1968), p. 129-51; Emi Sasano et al., "The Family in Physical Therapy," Physical Therapy, 57

no. 1 (1977), 153-59.

<sup>11</sup> Abel and Wilson, "Spinal Cord . . .," p. 195.

<sup>12</sup> For example, see Nathan Ackerman, "Family Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis: Implications of Difference," Family Process, 1 (1962), 30-43; Murray Bowen, "Theory in the Practice of Psychotherapy," in Family Therapy: Theory and Practice, ed. Philip Guerin (New York: Gardner Press, 1976), p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "The Relationship of Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice to Systems Theory and Practice in Family Therapy," Colloquium: Postgraduate Center for Mental Health, 1 no. 2 (1978), 55.

<sup>14</sup> Abel and Wilson, "Spinal Cord . . .," p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "Yukio Mishima--A Psychoanalytic Interpretation," Journal of the American Academy for Psychoanalysis, 6 no. 3 (1978), 403-24.

<sup>16</sup> Abel, "Yukio Mishima . . .," p. 403.

<sup>17</sup> Theodora M. Abel, "25 Years . . .," Colloquium: Postgraduate Center for Mental Health, 1 no. 1 (1978), 4

<sup>18</sup> Robert Yerkes, "Psychology in Relation to the War," Psychological Review, 25 (1918), 88-115.

<sup>19</sup> For a history of the limitations of testing, see Anne Anastasi, Psychological Testing, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), p. 3-22; Myra Shimberg, "An Investigation into the Validity of Norms with Special Reference to Urban and Rural Groups," Archives



of Psychology, 104 (1929), 4-84; Harold Jones, et al., "Enviromental Handicap in Mental Test Performance," University of California Publications in Psychology, 5 no. 3 (1932), 63-9.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see Earl Freed, rev. of Psychological Testing in Cultural Contexts, by Theodora M. Abel, Journal of Personality Assessment, 40 no. 4 (1976), 436-37.

<sup>21</sup> Theodora M. Abel, Psychological Testing in Cultural Contexts (New Haven: College and University Press, 1973), p. 21-2.

<sup>22</sup> For an example of other researchers, see Gardner Lindzey, Projective Techniques and Cross-Cultural Research (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1961).

<sup>23</sup> Abel, Psychological Testing, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Theodora M. Abel and Rhoda Métraux, Culture and Psychotherapy (New Haven: College and University Press, 1974), p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> Abel and Métraux, Culture and Psychotherapy, p. 179.

Memory is the thread of personal identity,  
history of the public identity. Men who  
have achieved any civic existence at all  
must, to sustain it, have some kind of his-  
tory, though, it may be history that is  
partly mythological or simply untrue.

-- Richard Hofstadter. The Progressive  
Historians

## Chapter Five

### "The Methods Best Calculated":

#### Theodora M. Abel's Art of Research

*Dr. Abel's artistry as a clinician and teacher is evaluated to portray her achievements in psychology. Her interdisciplinary methodological approach transcended the limitations of investigation solely within psychology. Abel's career as a psychologist may serve as a model for other professionals regardless of their specialty.*

Dr. Theodora M. Abel's extensive interest in psychological investigation and her published reaction to these investigations permits the reader an opportunity to observe developments within the discipline of psychology since the mid-1920s. Dr. Abel's involvement in psychology began as movements within this discipline emerged in this century, and her involvement has since continued. By viewing Abel as a historically representative figure in psychology, developments within this science take on a more personal and vivid note. The particular approaches Dr. Abel chose to pursue may be seen in reference to the larger body available within psychology. Abel consistent-

ly employed methodologies that went beyond the confining limits of her chosen discipline to benefit psychology and related sciences. Evidence of the significance of her contributions extends throughout her career.

One of the significant aspects of Dr. Abel's writing is her incorporation of the effects of culture on psychological investigation. Abel's pioneering efforts in this interdisciplinary method were noted by Margaret Mead:

In a period when psychologists were explaining that our expression of negation by shaking the head was due to the baby's turning away of its head from the breast and psychiatrists were worrying about the need of an infant to have experience with wet diapers--both views very naive and uncorrect by any knowledge of cultural diversity--Tao was already interested in cultural differences ...<sup>1</sup>

Mead's statements of the importance of Abel's contributions to the discipline of psychology and anthropology continued when she stated that

Over the years, many of us have drawn intellectual nourishment from Tao's varied interests, nourishment so much the stronger because we could speak a common language, as she included culture within her psychological comments and psychology within her cultural ones.<sup>2</sup>

The "common language" Mead refers to reveals Abel's dedication to psychology becoming an interdisciplinary science. Abel's psychological contributions to the discipline of anthropology enabled her to be elected a Fellow of the

American Anthropological Association in 1975.

Dr. Abel's place in psychology grew, in part, out of her work with recognized figures in the field. The field of psychology almost exclusively developed from a personal interaction between teacher and student. Typically, the student became known through association with a particular professor and, ultimately, with the sponsoring institution. Abel's first mentor in psychology was Margaret Floy Washburn. Washburn encouraged Abel's entry into the field of psychology by having Abel collaborate with her on a research project, recommending that she study at Columbia under Woodworth and assisting her in securing a position at the University of Illinois with Madison Bentley. Washburn's role as a psychologist enabled Abel to model a notable woman in that field. Psychology, at this early stage, was characterized as a male profession. Washburn's encouragement permitted Abel to be exposed to the teachings of two other major influences that can be seen through her writings. The influence of Robert Sessions Woodworth's eclectic position of psychology and Madison Bentley's dictum to publish is evidenced throughout Abel's career as a psychologist.

In her career, Dr. Abel studied with the leading theorists within their fields: Janet and Piéron of the French psychology school, Wertheimer of the Gestalt psychology school, Piotrowski and Klopfer in the usage of the

Rorschach, Horney as an introduction to psychoanalytic theory, and Ackerman as an introduction to family therapy. Of particular importance was the personal and professional relationship she had with Margaret Mead. These individuals represent some key figures in the modern history of psychology and anthropology. Abel's publications offer us an introduction to these theorists and to the multiplicity of influences one psychologist (Abel) chose to incorporate into her work.

Abel's early publications were written at a time when psychology was in transition; in the 1920s, psychological ideas were being expressed scientifically rather than philosophically. As an experimental psychologist, Dr. Abel's published ideas can be seen as advances in scientific certitude. For example, her work with the galvanometer (Chapter I, this study) revealed that this instrument did not accurately measure emotional response. Another example is her investigation on modes of thinking which, seen as groundwork for her later transitions within psychology, impressed her with Freudian concepts that she later utilized as a clinician (Chapter III, this study). Dr. Abel's transition to applied psychology permitted her to apply her expertise with the Rorschach technique in the examination of cultural diversity. Abel's mastery of this technique was recognized by her election to the presidency of the Society for Projective Techniques in 1947. Although

Dr. Abel had established herself as a reputable applied psychologist, she incorporated another approach in her professional skills. Her continued involvement with psychological investigation led her to include clinical psychology as an avenue for further psychological expression. Abel's role as a psychologist was one of a teacher of clinical skills as well as that of a clinician. Abel's teaching of clinical methods was in New York City at the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health. This innovative program offered low-cost psychological services from an interdisciplinary team of psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers.

Dr. Abel's position as a teacher enabled her to pioneer techniques for the training of other clinicians. Dr. Clara Thompson commented on Dr. Abel's ideas on the training of psychoanalytically orientated clinicians at the Postgraduate Center:

I think the basic criteria established in this paper are important ... I was much interested in the statement that evasion, projection and obsessive defenses seem less desirable than intellectualization, rationalization and repression. I have not tested this out personally, but it makes sense to me.

It seems to me that the main point of this paper is that it shows that, while the results of projective tests correlate rather well with the evaluation made through personal interviews, these results do not impressively agree with the final development of the candidate, that, although these methods may weed out the most undesirable, they cannot predict who is

best suited to practice this type of psychotherapy. I am glad that the authors recognize this and plan to work on devising some further methods of evaluation, and I agree with them that whatever methods are developed it is important not to lose the personal interview contact, that thus far the experienced interviewer who is gifted in sizing up people offers the best evaluating methods which we have developed to date.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Abel's intuitive ability as a clinician was enhanced by her expertise in the usage of projective techniques in this selection process.

At the end of World War II, the demand for the services of the psychologist and psychiatrist was enormous. This demand, often led to impersonal and incomplete training of the psychologist or psychiatrist. Dr. Abel's refusal to yield to the pressure of accelerated education of the clinician permitted the Postgraduate Center to retain, as the defining characteristic, the element of individuality. Abel's skills and contributions were publicly recognized at the Center, when, in 1963, she was awarded the Postgraduate Center Honorary Award.

Dr. Abel's pioneering efforts in psychology can be seen by her continued work in this discipline. Examples of these efforts are her introduction of the concept of family therapy to Iran in 1978, her teaching of family therapy in Egypt, Japan, Mexico, and her ongoing international lectures.<sup>4</sup> In 1973, Dr. Abel was elected an Honorary Member of the Mexican Association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists. She



was honored because of her "scientific efforts," "academic work" and her many contributions to psychoanalytic psychotherapy within Mexico. Abel's contributions to psychology were recognized in 1972 when she was elected Psychologist of the Year by the New York Society of Clinical Psychologists. Throughout her career, Dr. Abel voluntarily chose to involve herself in the inspection of the discipline of psychology. Her many elected positions demonstrate this willing involvement that goes beyond requirements within a particular profession.<sup>5</sup>

Robert MacIver's statement of Dr. Abel's dedication to the profession of psychology, made almost forty years ago, corroborates her dedication that is seen throughout her career. MacIver, speaking in 1942 of Abel's work on The Subnormal Adolescent Girl, stated that

In the Social Sciences we have had all too many works in which the authors have been more engrossed with the techniques they employed than with the subject they investigated. Such works are superficial and usually arid. Occasionally they are clever, seldom or never are they wise. It is only when the author is profoundly interested in his subject--interested as a human being in a problem relating to human beings and of concern to other human beings--that he is likely to make a genuine contribution, whether to knowledge or to public policy. Only his profound interest, given adequate scholarly preparation, will lead him to choose and develop the methods best calculated to illuminate his theme. Such devotion alone will evoke the true spirit of workmanship in the art of research.

The work before us offers a notable example of that art.<sup>6</sup>

MacIver is referring to Dr. Abel's ability to reveal the larger world through her published work. Abel recognized the need to develop methods which would incorporate the findings of many disciplines. These methods resulted in definite advancements in psychological investigation. However, these advances were not limited to psychology; the disciplines of anthropology and sociology benefitted from these psychological investigations.<sup>7</sup> In her portrayal of the subnormal adolescent girl, Dr. Abel brought to life an often ignored aspect of American culture--that of the mentally deficient. Abel accomplished this by her commitment to the understanding of the individual and her concern in maintaining the certitude of her chosen profession. Another example of her integrative pursuits within psychology was Abel's application of the psychological aspects of disability in a family therapy program. The seed of her integration was planted when Abel studied at Columbia. She was influenced by Woodworth's eclectic interdisciplinary psychology and, later at the University of Illinois, Bentley's objective psychological approach. The seed has flourished and blossomed under Dr. Abel's masterful guidance. Abel was recognized as successfully integrating seemingly different fields of psychology within her work.

By examining the published ideas of Dr. Abel's psychological work, other professionals are afforded the op-

portunity to envision the many avenues of investigation available within their chosen profession. The limits typically imposed upon a discipline often restrict the freedom of research. Dr. Abel's investigations went beyond this restriction and yet were not violations of professionalism. Rather, her interdisciplinary investigations permitted other psychologists to incorporate additional scientific methodologies in their work.

Dr. Abel's contributions are not only marked by her wide range of published interests. Abel entered a profession typically dominated by males. She transcended this prevailing feature of the profession to be recognized as a female scholar. This recognition permits Dr. Abel to be placed in an exemplary position not only for other professional women but for other less dominant groups within a profession.

In 1971, Dr. Abel retired, at the age of seventy-two, from the Postgraduate Center. The Center issued a special edition of the International Mental Health Research Newsletter honoring Dr. Abel for her dedication to psychological investigation. Among the contributors were Lewis Wolberg, Emanuel Schwartz, Vera Rubin and Molly Harrower. In Wolberg's tribute to Dr. Abel, he stated that

From the inception of the Postgraduate Center in 1945 to the present time, Dr. Theodora Abel has worked diligently to pro-

mote better inter-disciplinary relationships and toward introducing clinical experience in the training of the mental health professions in line with the broadest preventive and therapeutic goals. She has been singularly successful since our programs are being copied more and more throughout the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Abel's retirement did not lead to a decrease in her publications; rather, retirement allowed her the freedom to continue with writings that reveal the cumulative and integrative influence of her work.<sup>9</sup> In her writings, Abel consistently recognized the historical influences that enabled her to offer additional innovative contributions to psychology. By recognizing and building upon her own theoretical roots, she was able to significantly expand and add to the science of her chosen profession. Dr. Abel's continued written ideas on the varieties of cultural expression, on the importance of family therapy, and on psychoanalytic theory reveal the breadth of her understanding of the psychology of man. In her dedication to the possibilities of the discipline of psychology and with her interdisciplinary approach to psychological investigation, Dr. Abel may serve as a model for other professionals, regardless of their own theoretical orientations.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Mead, Pref., Culture and Psychotherapy, by Theodora M. Abel and Rhoda Métraux (New Haven: College and University Press, 1974), ii. "Tao" (rhymes with "Mayo") is the French adaptation of Dr. Abel's first name and was acquired when she attended the University of Paris in 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret, iii.

<sup>3</sup> Clara Thompson, Comments, "Screening Applicants for Training in Psychoanalytically Oriented Psychotherapy," in American Journal of Psychotherapy, 10 no. 1 (1956), 38-9.

<sup>4</sup> For a list of Dr. Abel's lectures, see Appendix A, especially the latter half.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the elected positions listed in the notes to the introduction, Dr. Abel was treasurer of the National Council of Women Psychologists, 1942-1943. She was also a Member-at-Large of the Board of Directors of the National Council of Women Psychologists, 1943-1945.

<sup>6</sup> Robert MacIver, Foreword, The Subnormal Adolescent Girl by Theodora M. Abel and Elaine Kinder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), v.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note, although unprovable by

examination of her published work, that Dr. Abel's theoretical position was influenced by her husband's work in sociology.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis Wolberg, "Guest Editorial," International Mental Health Research Newsletter, Special Issue, 13 no. 1 (Spring, 1971), 1.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Robert Havighurst et al., "Male Social Scientists: Lives After Sixty," The Gerontologist, 19 no. 1 (1979), 55-60. Another good discussion, that incorporates women into the study is, Robert Havighurst et al., Social Scientists and Educators: Lives After Sixty (Chicago: Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, 1976).

## APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A. The Public Lectures  
of  
Theodora M. Abel

Theodora M. Abel, "The General Use of the Questionnaire in Psychological Research," Faculty Seminar, University of Illinois, Urbana, Spring, 1926.

-----, "Stimulation of the Back as a Means of Arousing Tactual Perception of Movement," Faculty Seminar, University of Illinois, Urbana, May, 1926.

-----, "Unsynthetic Thinking Among Adults," American Psychological Association, Toronto, 1931.

-----, "Tactual Learning by Visual and Auditory Means," Eastern Branch of the American Psychological Association, New Haven, 1933.

-----, "Tactual Perception of Extent," American Psychological Association, Columbia University, 1934.

-----, "Cutaneous Localization Among Normals and Subnormals," Eastern Branch of the American Psychological Association, Fordham University, 1936.

-----, "An Analysis of Capacities for Performance



of Mental Defectives Skilled in Lace-Making,"  
8th Annual Meeting of the Association for Con-  
sulting Psychology, Albany, 1937.

-----, "Social Facilitation in Different Motor  
Tasks," American Psychological Association, Minn-  
neapolis, 1937.

----- and Roy Hamlin, "Test Patterns of Mental  
Defectives Skilled in Weaving," American Associ-  
ation of Applied Psychology, Minneapolis, 1937.

-----, "Test Pattern as a Measure of Occupational  
Aptitude," American Association of Applied Psycho-  
logy, Minneapolis, September, 1937.

-----, "The Use of Space and Vector Concepts in the  
Study of Behavior," Association for Research in  
Child Development, Babies Hospital, New York City,  
1937.

-----, "Schneider Index and Uncompleted Tasks,"  
Eastern Psychological Association, New York Univ-  
ersity, 1938.

----- and Jane Sill, "Dividing Squares--Mosaic  
Test," Eastern Psychological Association, Bryn  
Mawr, 1939.

----- and Elaine Kinder, "Attitudes of Subnormal  
Girls," American Association of Mental Deficiency,  
Chicago, 1939.

-----, "Work Adjustment of Subnormals," American

Association of Applied Psychology, Washington,  
1939.

-----, "Recall of Completed and Uncompleted Tasks,"  
Eastern Psychological Association, Atlantic City,  
1940.

-----, "Success in Industry of Subnormals," American  
Association of Mental Deficiency, Atlantic City,  
1940.

-----, "Special Techniques for Measuring Dynamic  
Aspects of Functioning in the Mentally Deficient,"  
American Association of Applied Psychology, Penn-  
sylvania State University, September, 1940.

-----, "Moral Judgements Among Subnormal Adolescent  
Girls," American Psychological Association, Penn-  
sylvania State University, September 1940.

----- and E. J. Humphrey, "Institutional Biograph-  
ies of Unstable Subnormal Girls," American Associ-  
ation of Mental Deficiency, Salt Lake City, June,  
1941.

-----, "Interpersonal Relationships of Negro and  
White Subnormal Girls," 9th Topological Conference,  
Duke University, 1941.

-----, "Dominance of Negro Subnormal Institution-  
alized Girls," Eastern Psychological Association,  
April, 1942.

-----, "The Subnormal Girl in Need of Psychotherapy,"

Association for the Advancement of Psychotherapy,  
February, 1943.

-----, "Negro-White Interpersonal Relationships  
in a Limited Environment," New York Academy of  
Science, Psychology Section, February, 1943.

-----, "Responses of Negro and White Morons to  
the Rorschach Test," American Association of Men-  
tal Deficiency, New York City, May, 1943.

-----, "Responses of Negro and White Morons to  
the Thematic Apperception Test," American Associ-  
ation of Mental Deficiency, Philadelphia, May,  
1944.

-----, "Rorschach Tests of Subnormal Success and  
Failure," American Association of Mental Deficiency,  
Cleveland, October, 1945.

-----, "Group Rorschach Testing in a Vocational  
High School," New York Rorschach Institute, Novem-  
ber, 1945.

----- and G. E. von Grunebaum, "Contribution of  
an Arab Scholar to the Problem of Learning," East-  
ern Psychological Association, Fordham University,  
April, 1946.

-----, "The Rorschach Test in the Study of Culture,"  
Rorschach Institute, Philadelphia, April, 1948.

-----, "Psychological Aspects of Facial Disfigure-  
ment: A Rorschach Study," 13th International Con-

gress of Psychology, Stockholm, Sweden, July,  
1951.

-----, "Cultural Contexts and Psychotherapy,"  
American Orthopsychiatric Association, Atlantic  
City, 1952.

----- and Emanuel Schwartz, "The Professional  
Education of the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist,"  
Second Inter-American Congress of Psychology, Mex-  
ico City, 1954.

----- Sadi Oppenheim and Clifford Sager, "Screen-  
ing Applicants for Training in Psychoanalytically  
Oriented Psychotherapy," American Orthopsychiatric  
Association, March, 1954.

----- and Rhoda Métraux, "Normal and Deviant Be-  
havior in a Peasant Community: Montserrat, British  
West Indies," American Orthopsychiatric Association,  
Chicago, 1955.

----- and Rhoda Métraux, "Sex Differences in a  
Negro Peasant Community: Montserrat, British West  
Indies," 5th Inter-American Congress of Psychology,  
Mexico, 1957.

-----, "Shift in Intermediary Object-Gradient  
During the Course of Psychotherapy," Postgraduate  
Center for Mental Health, January, 1959.

-----, "Differential Responses to Projective Test-  
ing in a Negro Peasant Community: Montserrat,

British West Indies," 58th Meeting of the  
American Anthropological Association, Mexico  
City, 1959.

-----, "Dreams of a Chinese Patient," Postgraduate  
Center for Mental Health, 1960.

-----, S. Oppenheim, D. Berg, E. Schwartz, B. Reiss,  
and M. Aronson, "The Use of Projective Techniques  
in the Training of Psychotherapists," 68th Annual  
Convention, American Psychological Association,  
Chicago, September, 1960.

-----, "The Concept of Mental Health," New York  
Society of Clinical Psychologists, May, 1962.

-----, "Survival and Clinical Practice," New York  
Society of Clinical Psychologists, May, 1962.

-----, "Psychotherapy and Delinquency," Psychology  
Department, Tokyo University, 1963.

-----, "Cultural Contexts and Psychotherapy,"  
American Orthopsychiatric Association, Chicago, 1965.

-----, "The Single Case in Research: Use of Dreams,"  
Postgraduate Center for Mental Health, February, 1965.

-----, "Projective Tests in Therapy," Postgraduate  
Center for Mental Health, n.d.

-----, "Psychotherapy and Psychodiagnostic Testing,"  
Postgraduate Center for Mental Health, n.d.

-----, "Treating the Adolescent," Children's Hospital  
Mexico City, 1969.

- , "Terapia Familiar Breve Para Pacientes  
Con Internamientos Cortos un Medio Para Entrenar  
y Para Dar Terapia (un Estudio Piloto)," Mexican  
Association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists,  
February, 1970
- , "Culture and the Person," Autonomous Univ-  
ersity of Mexico, Mexico City, 1971.
- , "Homosexuality,"; "Brief Family Therapy,"  
Mexican Association of Psychoanalytic Psychothera-  
pists, 1971.
- , "Family Dynamics," Department of Psychology,  
University of Hiroshima, April, 1974.
- , "Family Therapy," Iman Children's Hospital,  
Mexico City, 1974.
- , "Family Therapy," Department of Psychology,  
Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt, January, 1974.
- and Rhoda Métraux, "Universal and Cultural  
Regularities: Aspects of Performance in the Lowen-  
feld Mosaic Test," 73rd Annual Meeting of the Ameri-  
can Anthropological Association, Mexico City, 1974.
- , "Various Uses of the Lowenfeld Mosaic Tech-  
niques," Society of Personality Assessment, New  
York, March, 1976.
- , "Spinal Cord Injured and Family Systems,"  
6th World Congress of Social Psychiatry, Opetija,  
Yugoslavia, Fall, 1976.

- , "Family Therapy," Department of Psychology,  
Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt, Fall, 1976.
- , "Family Therapy," Department of Psychology,  
University of Hiroshima, Fall, 1977.
- , member of Symposium: "The Challenges in the  
Development of Mental Health Services for South-  
western American Indians," 7th World Congress of  
Social Psychiatry, Lisbon, Portugal, October, 1978.
- and Joyce Wilson, "Espina Dorsal Lesionada  
y Sistemas Familiares: Estudio Piloto," 1st Con-  
gress of Social Psychology, Buenos Aires, Argentina,  
March, 1978.
- , "Family Therapy," Neuropsychiatric Institute  
of Pahlair University, Shiraz, Iran, 1978.
- , "Creative Retirement," American Group Psy-  
chotherapy Association, New York City, February, 1979.
- , "Couple Therapy," Mexican Association of Psy-  
choanalytic Psychotherapy, Mexico City, January, 1980.

B. Number of Publications and Lectures  
by Year

<u>Year</u>	<u>Publications</u>	<u>Lectures</u>
1925.	2.	
1926.		2
1927.	2.	
1930.	1.	
1931.		1
1932.	1.	
1933.		1
1934.	2.	1
1936.	2.	1
1937.		5
1938.	6.	1
1939.	5.	3
1940.	2.	4
1941.	2.	2
1942.	4.	1
1943.	3.	3
1944.	3.	1
1945.	6.	2
1946.	4.	1
1948.	1.	1
1949.	1.	
1950.	1.	
1951.	1.	1
1952.	2.	1
1953.	2.	1
1954.	3.	2
1955.	2.	1
1956.	3.	
1957.	1.	
1958.	1.	
1959.	1.	2
1960.	2.	2
1961.	1.	
1962.	2.	2
1963.		1
1964.	1.	
1965.	1.	4
1967.	1.	
1968.	1.	
1969.		1
1970.		1
Subtotal	<u>73</u>	<u>49</u>



APPENDIX B. (Continued)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Publications</u>	<u>Lectures</u>
1971. . . . .	1. . . . .	2
1972. . . . .	1. . . . .	
1973. . . . .	1. . . . .	
1974. . . . .	2. . . . .	4
1975. . . . .	1. . . . .	
1976. . . . .	1. . . . .	3
1977. . . . .	. . . . .	1
1978. . . . .	5. . . . .	3
1979. . . . .	1. . . . .	1
1980. . . . .	2. . . . .	1
	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>
Subtotal forward	<u>73</u>	<u>49</u>
Total	<u>88</u>	<u>64</u>

Dr. Abel has consistently published and lectured throughout her career. The publications listed are only those that are readily available in any university library. Other publications were not included. For example, The Author Index, Psychological Abstracts contains an entry for an article written by Abel in 1948, "The Training of Clinical Psychologists: Internships and Externships," New York: National Committee for Mental Hygiene. This article was mimeographed and not widely circulated; therefore, it was not included in Dr. Abel's bibliography. Newspaper articles or other mimeographed material that had limited circulation are treated similarly.

The number of lectures given by Dr. Abel in the period of 1926 to 1947 is accurate. From 1947 forward, the number of lectures given is an approximate figure.

### C. Journals Where Published Materials are Located

Archives of Psychology  
Journal of Comparative Psychology  
American Journal of Psychology  
Journal of Experimental Psychology  
Kwartalnik Psychologiczny  
Journal of Social Psychology  
Character and Personality  
Journal of Applied Psychology  
Journal of Psychology  
Journal of Genetic Psychology  
Proceedings from the American Association on Mental De-  
ficiency  
Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology  
American Journal of Mental Deficiency  
Rorschach Research Exchange  
Journal of Projective Techniques  
Journal of Personality  
American Journal of Psychotherapy  
Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences  
Journal of Clinical Psychology  
American Journal of Orthopsychiatry  
Criminalia  
Szondi Newsletter  
International Journal of Social Psychiatry  
International Mental Health Newsletter  
The Psychoanalytic Study of Society  
New Directions in Mental Health  
Group Therapy  
Colloquium: Postgraduate Center for Mental Health  
American Academy of Psychoanalysis  
American Psychologist  
The Clinical Psychologist

The journals are listed in the order in which ar-  
ticles by Dr. Abel first appeared. The shift in her par-  
ticular approach to psychology is evident by successive  
examination of each title of the journals listed.

D. Chronological Chart of Important Dates in  
the Career of  
Dr. Theodora M. Abel

<u>Year</u>	<u>AFFILIATIONS</u>	<u>ACHIEVEMENTS</u>
1923	Psychologist, Manhattan Trade School for Girls (part-time), grant from Commonwealth Fund, research on Mental Deficiency (1923-1925)	Diploma in Psychology, University of Paris.
1924		Began lifelong friendship with Margaret Mead while at Columbia.
1925	Instructor in Psychology, University of Illinois. (1925-1926)	Ph.D., Columbia University.
1926	Fellow of the National Research Council at Cornell University and at the University of Illinois; Study on Thinking Process and Galvanic Skin Reflex. (1926-1928)	
1927		E.B. Titchener's recommendation to and Dr. Abel's acceptance as full member in Sigma Xi.
1929	Instructor in Psychology, Sarah Lawrence College. (1929-1935)	

APPENDIX D (Continued)

<u>Year</u>	<u>AFFILIATIONS</u>	<u>ACHIEVEMENTS</u>
1935	Fellow of Education Board of Rockefeller Foundation; Study of Thinking Processes in Adolescents for Progressive Education Association. (1935-1936)	Exposed to the ideas of Max Wertheimer at the New School for Social Research. (1935-1936)
1936	Director of Research at Manhattan Trade School for Girls, under grant from Kent Fund. Study of Subnormal Girls Training for Industry. (1936-1940)	Exposed to the ideas of Karen Horney at the New School for Social Research. (1936-1937)
1940	Research Psychologist and then Senior Psychologist at Letchworth Village, New York Department of Mental Hygiene. (1940-1946)	Secretary, Eastern Psychological Association. (1940-1942)
1942		Publication of <u>Subnormal Adolescent Girl</u> (in collaboration with Elaine Kinder).  Treasurer, National Council of Women Psychologists. (1942-1943)
1943		Member-at-Large, Board of Directors of the National Council of Women Psychologists. (1943-1945)
1944		Trained in the Rorschach technique by Zygmunt Piotrowski and Bruno Klopfer.

APPENDIX D (Continued)

<u>Year</u>	<u>AFFILIATIONS</u>	<u>ACHIEVEMENTS</u>
1947	Psychologist, Columbia Study on Contemporary Cultures, grant from Office of Naval Research. (1947-1949)	President of Society of Projective Techniques.
1948	Psychologist, then Director of Psychology (1949) at Postgraduate Center for Mental Health. (1948-1971)	
1949	Psychologist, Study of the Psychiatric and Social Aspects of Facial Disfigurement at Bellevue Hospital under grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. (1949-1951)	
1950	Adjunct Professor of Psychology, Long Island University. (1950-1963)	
1951	Private Practice, New York City. (1951-1971)	
1952		Personal Analysis. (1952-1956)
1954		Publication of <u>Facial Deformities and Plastic Surgery: A Psychosocial Study</u> (in collaboration with Frances MacGregor, Albert Bryt, Edith Lauer and Serena Weissmann).

APPENDIX D (Continued)

<u>Year</u>	<u>AFFILIATIONS</u>	<u>ACHIEVEMENTS</u>
1956	Private Practice, Pearl River, New York. (1956-1964)	Vice-President, American Orthopsychiatric Association. (1956-1957)
1958		Vice-President, American Psychopathological Association. (1958-1959)
1959	Training Analyst, Postgraduate Center for Mental Health. (1959-1971)	
1963	Consultant in Clinical Psychology, Veterans Administration Hospital, East Orange, N.J. (1963-1967)	Postgraduate Center Honorary Award.
1965		President, New York Society of Clinical Psychologists.  Family Therapy training, Nathan Ackerman. (1965-1966)
1968	Co-Director, Family Therapy Program, Postgraduate Center for Mental Health. (1968-1971)	
1971	Director Emeritus of Psychology, Postgraduate Center for Mental Health. (1971 to present)	
	Private Practice, Albuquerque, New Mexico. (1971 to present)	

APPENDIX D (Continued)

<u>Year</u>	<u>AFFILIATIONS</u>	<u>ACHIEVEMENTS</u>
1971	Clinical Associate, Department of Psychiatry, University of New Mexico Medical School. (1971 to 1979)  Chief, Family Therapy Program, Child Guidance Center. (1971 to present)	
1972		Psychologist of the Year, New York Society of Clinical Psychologists.
1973		Honorary Member, Mexican Association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists.  <u>Publication of Psychological Testing in Cultural Contexts.</u>
1974		Publication of <u>Culture and Psychotherapy</u> (in collaboration with Rhoda Métraux)
1975	Teacher and Trainer, Fielding Institute, Santa Barbara, CA (1975 to present)	
1978		Introduction of Family Therapy to Iran.
1979	Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry, UNM Medical School.	

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Theodora M. Abel

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