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Understanding Richard Washburn Child's Authoritarian Personality: From Theodor Adorno to the Histories of Gender and Emotion

Katy Hull

1. Introduction: An Uncanny Resemblance

- ¹ The origins of this article lie in a sense of recognition I felt when I read *The Authoritarian Personality*. In 2019, I joined the thousands of readers of a new edition of Adorno et al.'s 1950 book.¹ Like many others, I found an uncanny resemblance between the forty-fifth president and the boastful, power-hungry, deceitful personality type described by Adorno and his co-authors.² But Donald Trump was less on my mind than another man. Born in 1881, Richard Washburn Child was a diplomat, writer, and political operative. Child was chauvinistic, narcissistic, and manipulative. He was also a fan of Mussolini's Italy. I had been getting to know Child since 2015, by reading his journalism in the *Saturday Evening Post* and his correspondence, which is housed in the Library of Congress, National Archives, and Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. Reading *The Authoritarian Personality* reinforced my hunch that Child's personality had something to do with his fascist sympathies.
- ² Child was the US ambassador to Italy from 1921 until 1924. He was also a prolific author and journalist; the *Saturday Evening Post* alone published over forty of his short stories and more than sixty of his longform news articles.³ In 1928, Child gained further prominence as the editor of Benito Mussolini's English-language autobiography.⁴ In addition to his career as a writer, Child had experience working on political campaigns and in government. His earliest political work was within the Progressive Party in 1912, in a campaign position that put him in contact with the party's leader, Theodore Roosevelt.⁵ At the Treasury Department during World War I, Child produced

propaganda encouraging Americans to buy government bonds. After a stint as the editor of *Collier's* magazine, he joined the campaign team of the Republican presidential candidate Warren Harding. He worked as an informal spokesperson for Harding's successor, Calvin Coolidge. In 1932, Child formed and chaired the League of Republicans for Roosevelt—an organization of erstwhile Republicans who supported the Democratic candidate in his bid for the presidency. It was a move that typified Child's tendency to prioritize his own career over party loyalty or ideological purity.⁶

- 3 Historians have recognized Child's contribution to the United States' accommodating relationship with fascist Italy in the 1920s and early 1930s, and have offered various (and largely compatible) explanations for his fascist sympathies. Writing in the late 1970s, Gian Giacomo Migone argued that Child's support for Mussolini's regime was the product of a Republican worldview that focused on making Europe safe for the American dollar.⁷ Building on Migone's work, diplomatic historian David Schmitz contextualized Child's philo-fascism within the State Department's policy of appeasement in the interwar years.⁸ In his 1972 *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America*, John Diggins, an intellectual historian, emphasized how a culture of insecurity in the 1920s prompted some writers, including Child, to characterize Mussolini as a synthesis of opposites—simultaneously a preserver of tradition and “a genius of innovation.”⁹ Most recently, in *The Machine Has a Soul: American Sympathy with Italian Fascism*, I argued that Child was attracted to fascism as an antidote to the spiritual malaise and democratic decadence associated with American modernity.¹⁰ While Migone, Schmitz, and Diggins did not discount psychological explanations for Child's fascist sympathies, they did suggest that his personality was beside the point. In my own work, however, I pointed to a link between Child's self-image and his admiration of Mussolini.¹¹
- 4 This article builds on my earlier contribution to provide more expansive insights into Child's authoritarian personality. Child was a conformist; by expressing admiration for fascism in the *Post* (the most mainstream of mass-circulation magazines), he could present himself as an upholder of conventions. He was xenophobic; fascist ideologies supported his hatred of the Other. He was voraciously ambitious; association with *il Duce* enabled him to tout himself as a confidant to one of the world's most powerful men. He was cynical—a trait that lent itself readily to fascist conceptions of elite rule and inevitable war. Above all, Child was ostentatiously macho, and affiliation with fascism reinforced his masculine self-image. A skeptical reader would suggest that correlation is not causality, or that perhaps causality ran the other way—so that exposure to Italian fascism made Child a conformist, prejudiced, ambitious, cynical, poseur. But chronology does not support this interpretation, since evidence for these personality traits runs through Child's writing from the early 1900s, long before he encountered Italian fascism.
- 5 The observation that Child was a potential fascist even before he found fascism is compatible with *The Authoritarian Personality's* main argument that some personality types are more susceptible than others to fascism. Adorno et al. presented their principal innovation, the F scale, as a measure of “fascist receptivity at the personality level,” meaning that it could detect people who were liable to succumb to fascist propaganda. The authors identified nine personality traits that correlated with potential fascism:
 - a. Conventionalism. . . .
 - b. Authoritarian Submission: Submissive, uncritical attitude toward idealized moral

authorities of the ingroup. . . .

c. Authoritarian Aggression: Tendency to be on the lookout for, and to condemn, reject, and punish people who violate conventional values. . . .

d. Anti-intraception: Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the tender-minded. . . .

e. Superstition and Stereotypy. . . .

f. Power and "Toughness": . . . identification with power figures . . . exaggerated assertion of strength. . . .

g. Destructiveness and Cynicism. . . .

h. Projectivity: The disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world. . . .

i. Sex: Exaggerated concern with sexual "goings-on."¹²

- 6 All were elements that I recognized in Child. Child's personality also resembled one of Adorno et al.'s case studies—a man with the pseudonym of Mack, who scored high on the F scale. Mack yearned to "serve powerful interests and so *participate in their power*."¹³ His ambitions stretched beyond "improving his lot" in any "ordinary sociological sense," to advancing "his status in a hierarchy."¹⁴ Rather than frankly acknowledging his ambition, Mack tended to couch his aspirations in moral terms. This refusal to recognize his selfish interests was consistent with Mack's apparent incapacity to reflect on the "conditions or determinants of his own behavior."¹⁵ Although Mack espoused the "tenets of traditional conservatism," he could best be thought of as a "*pseudoconservative*," since the "kind of change" he desired threatened to undo the "very institutions" with which he purportedly identified.¹⁶ In these descriptions of Mack, I could just as easily have been reading descriptions of Richard Washburn Child.
- 7 The challenge before me was how to make sense of the similarities between Child and the potentially fascist personality described by Adorno et al. This article proposes an approach that draws on insights from the histories of gender and emotions to argue that social norms and cultural conventions contributed to the construction of Child's personality. It aims both to add to existing explanations of Child's fascist sympathies and to suggest updated ways for scholars to understand and employ the concept of an authoritarian personality. Part two describes the impetus for, methodology of, and responses to *The Authoritarian Personality*. It explores how the authors' reliance on psychoanalytical explanations contributed both to the study's initial impact as well as its subsequent reputational decline. Part three examines how the histories of gender and emotions can offer an alternative approach to psychoanalytical accounts of authoritarian personalities by emphasizing the social construction of behavioral norms and affective responses. Parts four and five apply these insights by analyzing the case of Richard Washburn Child. Part four examines how normative conceptions of masculinity influenced Child and encouraged him to support Italian fascism. Part five suggests that socially-sanctioned behavior among elite, white men encouraged Child's animosity toward outsiders and attachment to power figures, and offered him no incentive to examine or correct his belief systems and behavior. The conclusion reflects on Adorno's pessimistic suggestion that the authoritarian personality was embedded in modernity. While the authoritarian personality type remains prevalent today, theoretical insights from the histories of gender and emotions indicate that its occurrence remains contingent on social and cultural circumstances.

2. *The Authoritarian Personality* in History and Historiography

- 8 The impetus for *The Authoritarian Personality* came from a credible anxiety that “it”—fascism—“could happen here,” in the United States.¹⁷ In the run-up to World War II, populist figures, including Charles Coughlin and Gerald Smith, espoused antisemitic conspiracy theories and adopted authoritarian styles of leadership and communication. They garnered mass followings.¹⁸ The threat of homegrown far-right movements, combined with the United States’ anemic response to the Holocaust, prompted the American Jewish Committee (AJC) to commission five studies, under the series title “Studies in Prejudice,” at the end of the Second World War. The AJC’s interests broadly aligned with the research program of the Institute for Social Research (ISR or Frankfurt School), comprised of Jewish exiles from Nazi Germany. Max Horkheimer, the institute’s director, became the series editor. Leo Löwenthal, another member of the ISR, co-authored an investigation into the rhetorical strategies of extremist agitators in the United States.¹⁹ Theodor Adorno became the principal author in a study of the psychological determinants of prejudice (which later assumed the title *The Authoritarian Personality*) alongside three Berkeley-based psychologists—R. Nevitt Sanford, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, and Daniel Levinson. As a Jewish refugee from Austria under Nazism, Frenkel-Brunswick, like Adorno, had experienced the horrors of fascism firsthand.²⁰
- 9 Reflecting their combined expertise in sociology, psychology, and psychoanalysis, Adorno et al. employed a multidisciplinary approach in their study. They based the quantitative elements of their research on survey data: three questionnaires gauged two thousand male and female respondents’ levels of ethnocentrism (E scale), antisemitism (A-S scale), and politico-economic conservatism (PEC scale); a further questionnaire measured their position on the potential fascist personality scale (F scale). Clinical interviews with a group of around eighty subjects underpinned the qualitative elements of the book.²¹ Psychoanalytical theories influenced both the design of the study and the interpretations of results. For instance, whereas the researchers devised the E, A-S, and PEC scales to measure respondents’ views on minoritized groups and politics, they designed the F scale to detect subjects’ underlying ideas about authority, personal relationships, and the self.²² The clinical interviews probed further still, so as to ascertain how childhood “identification with, or rebellion against” parents had shaped the individual.²³ When accounting for Mack’s personality, for example, the researchers theorized that his mother’s early death and his father’s distant parenting style contributed to suppressed anger and fear. Mack’s authoritarian personality derived from “deep-lying needs” formed in early childhood, they wrote.²⁴
- 10 The mid-century *zeitgeist* primed Americans to receive *The Authoritarian Personality*. Psychoanalysis was at its apex, both in terms of the number of trained practitioners and the prestige conferred on the discipline.²⁵ Meanwhile, the McCarthyite purges produced a sense of urgency among left-leaning academics to understand the sources of mass conformity. As a result, Adorno et al.’s study found audiences in the fields of social and child psychology, sociology, and political science. The idea of an authoritarian personality also filtered into popular culture, with newspapers headlining the study’s findings, and even offering do-it-yourself personality tests.²⁶ To a large extent, attention crystalized around the F scale. Writing in 1955, two

researchers identified over sixty studies that made direct use of the scale in the field of psychology alone.²⁷ These ranged from one that investigated the link between neurosis and authoritarianism to another that traced the relationship between authoritarian attitudes and dreams.²⁸ But some scholars looked beyond the F Scale for inspiration. For instance, the historian Richard Hofstadter used the concept of the *pseudoconservative* to describe Joseph McCarthy's adherents as people whose surface conventionality belied "violence, anarchic impulses, and chaotic destructiveness in the unconscious sphere."²⁹

- 11 Interest in *The Authoritarian Personality* declined after the late 1960s. Methodological issues accounted for part of the study's waning reputation. For instance, critics charged that the affirmative statements that underpinned the E, A-S, PEC, and F scales could skew results, since submissive personalities (as well as the bored or impatient) would be more likely to agree to any positive statement.³⁰ Changes in the political and intellectual climate also impacted the usefulness of the study. The Cold War cemented conservatives' view that left-wing authoritarianism abroad, rather than right-wing authoritarianism at home, was the principal threat to democracy. The civil rights movement and feminism helped to secure a liberal order, which—although contested—seemed less under threat than in the 1930s and 1950s. Above all, psychoanalytical approaches, which had once accounted for *The Authoritarian Personality's* standing as a cutting-edge study, contributed to its reputational decline. Adorno et al.'s arguments that authoritarianism was rooted in "unconscious struggles, repressed hatreds, projected hostilities, and so on" lost validity with the deterioration of Freud's authority in American academia and popular culture.³¹
- 12 While the influence of *The Authoritarian Personality* first flowed and then ebbed in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and political science, its impact on the study of history remained constant—and limited. Hofstadter was a notable exception: most historians took umbrage with psychological explanations for political trends. For instance, in an influential study of far-right figures in the interwar years, Leo Ribuffo argued that Adorno et al. erred in their portrayal of the authoritarian personality as "irrational," because this suggested that extremism could not be understood through analysis of cultural and political forces.³² Federico Finchelstein, a historian of transatlantic fascism, has recently expressed a similar point of view, writing that *The Authoritarian Personality* offered a "a non-contextual or non-historical idea of fascism."³³ Ribuffo and Finchelstein suggest that, by drawing so heavily on Freudian theories, Adorno et al. presented fascism as "ahistorical"—as imbibed in the human experience as mother's milk.³⁴
- 13 In the introduction to the new edition to *The Authoritarian Personality*, however, the intellectual historian Peter Gordon implies that historians' aversion to the book stems, at least in part, from an incomplete reading of Adorno. Gordon emphasizes that Adorno had reservations about purely psychoanalytical explanations for potential fascism.³⁵ In remarks prior to the book's publication, Adorno stated that "social factors" were "incomparably stronger" as a source of prejudice "than the 'psyche' of any one individual." Building on his and Horkheimer's recent theories about "the culture industry," Adorno argued that mass culture made people vulnerable to fascist propaganda by turning them into "submissive centers of reactions, looking for the conventional 'thing to do.'"³⁶ He articulated this reasoning further in a 1951 essay in which he discussed the limitations of psychoanalytical approaches to the study of personality. Adorno posited that in a modern society "in which each person has been

reduced to a social atom . . . psychological processes . . . have ceased to appear as the determining forces of the social process.”³⁷ Adorno, in short, argued that mass culture trumped the role once assigned to parents in the Freudian model, producing conformist and submissive adults.

- 14 Gordon's close reading of Adorno suggests that it would be a distortion to present this article as a correction to the psychoanalytical approaches offered in *The Authoritarian Personality* without acknowledging that Adorno provided the seeds of this correction himself. It is more accurate to position my work as challenging *The Authoritarian Personality*'s emphasis on psychoanalytical explanations by building on Adorno's own recognition of the role of social forces in shaping potentially fascist personalities. Part three, below, draws on theories from the histories of gender and emotions to do just this.

3. Gender and Emotions: An Updated Approach to Authoritarian Personalities

- 15 The insights garnered from gender history and the history of emotions can contribute to an updated understanding of the authoritarian personality type by shifting the emphasis away from psychoanalytical approaches, which rooted authoritarian tendencies in early childhood experiences and parenting styles, to a more expansive analysis of the social norms and cultural expectations that shape personalities through to adulthood. These overlapping fields of scholarship are largely compatible with Adorno's own belief (elucidated more fully beyond *The Authoritarian Personality* than in the book itself) that social and historical forces, rather than purely psychoanalytical ones, were the main drivers of potential fascism.
- 16 It has been almost four decades since Joan Scott called on feminist historians to analyze gender as “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes” and “a primary way of signifying relations of power.”³⁸ Scott was in the avant-garde of a historiographical endeavor to investigate how cultures produced and normalized sex-based differences. In her wake, historians have examined how womanhood and femininity, as well as manhood and masculinity, were defined at historically specific junctures.³⁹ While there is not space here to give a comprehensive overview of the scholarship since Scott's intervention, for the purposes of this article, it is important to note is that historians of gender have revealed constructs that in any given place and time shaped societal understandings of normal (and abnormal) behavior. Although some gender historians (including Scott herself) incorporate post-Freudian psychoanalytical theories into their analyses, gender history, on the whole, has shifted the focus away from predominantly psychoanalytical explanations, to emphasize how society and culture beyond the “family and household experience” have influenced norms of human behavior.⁴⁰
- 17 Sometimes overlapping with gender history, historians of emotions analyze how “societal influences, economic forces, political interventions, and religious framings,” among other factors, have shaped emotional norms.⁴¹ In 1985, Carol and Peter Steans coined the term “emotionology” to refer to the emotional standards of any given society. ⁴²Subsequent historians—for instance, Barbara Rosenwein—have investigated how such standards circulated in smaller subcultures or “emotional communities,”

consisting of “groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or devalue—the same or related emotions.”⁴³ As Rosenwein and other scholars point out, emotions frequently have gendered dimensions.⁴⁴ For instance, according to Graham Barker-Benfield, in eighteenth century Britain, a “culture of sensibility” encouraged men to cry; by the turn of the twentieth century, Britons shunned tears as unmasculine behavior.⁴⁵ In other words, similarly to the scholarship on gender history, the history of emotions indicates that complex cultural and social forces work to shape affective and cognitive responses in place and time.

- 18 Written decades before the elucidation of the histories of gender and emotions, some of the observations in *The Authoritarian Personality* nonetheless lend themselves to analysis through these theoretical lenses. Adorno et al. observed that both men and women who scored high on the F scale hewed rigidly to contemporary gender binaries. The former embraced traits such as “determination, energy, industry, independence, decisiveness, and will power”; the latter tended “to think of themselves as feminine and soft.”⁴⁶ Long before the scholar Judith Butler articulated the theory of gender performativity, Adorno et al. suggested that Mack—their prototypical potential fascist—proffered his “leather jacket” and his love of guns as “unmistakable signs of masculinity.”⁴⁷ Many of the traits that Adorno et al. associated with the authoritarian personality, including “aggression,” “[p]ower and ‘toughness,’” and “[o]pposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the tender-minded,” were traits that historians of gender and emotions have linked to hegemonic masculinity in twentieth-century North America.⁴⁸ While Adorno et al. asserted that unresolved psychological conflicts lay at the root of these personality traits, recent scholarship suggests that it would be instructive to investigate the influence of gender norms and emotional standards. This seems particularly relevant in the case of male subjects, since—as the researchers noted—men, on average, scored higher than women on the F scale.⁴⁹ The next section of this article draws on insights from these historiographies to examine Richard Washburn Child's authoritarian personality.

4. Richard Washburn Child on Masculinity, Manliness, and Mussolini

- 19 Child's social sphere, which consisted of elite, white Americans, shaped his ideas of normative masculinity. Child was raised in Massachusetts in a WASP (or white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) family that traced its presence in America back to the early seventeenth century.⁵⁰ His uncle was Charles Sumner Bird, a successful industrialist. Bird bankrolled the family, enabling Child's education, first at a boarding school and then at Harvard University.⁵¹ At Harvard, Child played on the football team and was president of the *Advocate*—the college's literary magazine.⁵² He stayed on for law school. Child was a member of various clubs and societies, including the Harvard Club and Lawyers Club (both in New York), and the National Press Club and Council on Foreign Relations (in Washington, D.C.).⁵³ He could, and did, marry well, first to Elizabeth Scott, who came from “a prominent Virginia family,” and then to Maude Parker, an author published in the *Smart Set*.⁵⁴ He summered in Newport, Rhode Island—the watering place of northern American elites.⁵⁵ Child's social sphere, in other words, was made up of overlapping domains which excluded the vast majority of Americans based on their

class, race, ethnicity, and—frequently—gender. This selective segment of society set the boundaries for Child's own attitudes and behavior.

- 20 As argued by gender historians, normative masculinity, of the kind that Child's social group typically subscribed to, was at an inflection point in the early twentieth century, due to the combined forces of bureaucratization, mass consumption, and expanding women's rights. For many elite men, earlier models of manhood, which had emphasized responsibility and self-restraint, felt less relevant than a new ideal of masculinity centered on consumption and physical strength.⁵⁶ Pseudo-science contributed to a belief that violence was healthy for upper-class men as an antidote to "overcivilization"; and attitudes toward male sexuality shifted from demands for abstinence to a valorization of sexual drive.⁵⁷ At the same time, early twentieth-century culture was shot through with ambivalence about these changing norms. The "culture heroes" of the 1920s were often figures who reconciled the tensions between nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideals. For instance, the career of the celebrity baseball player Babe Ruth lent itself to a Victorian morality tale of hard work and self-control, while, on the pitch, Ruth embodied modern masculine values of strength and aggression.⁵⁸
- 21 Child embraced forms of hardboiled masculinity and competitiveness that were fashionable among men of his race and class. From his football playing days onward, he conceived of himself as a "he-man"—the contemporary byword for male virility and strength.⁵⁹ Reflecting the modern trend in physical masculinity, Child littered his own writing with references to his embodied power. For instance, he enclosed a photograph of himself in a letter to his father, sent from Rome in 1923. "No so soft in the stomach eh?," he wrote, fishing for a compliment that was central to his sense of self.⁶⁰ Elsewhere, he used the language of sports and war to suggest his own aggressive qualities. For example, he described one career move as "the biggest play" he had made in his life, and measured his own "ambition" as a mark of "courage."⁶¹ "I've turned a corner and I'm going hard when I see the road," he reflected in early 1924, as he contemplated his next step following the ambassadorship to Italy.⁶²
- 22 Concurrently, Child conveyed disgust toward materialistic and consumption-based forms of masculinity. Sometimes, he expressed dismay about a leisure-oriented, pleasure-driven society. For instance, he complained that he was suffering from "a kind of spiritual death" within a "silly, vapid, degenerate" circle of expatriates in Rome and voiced a longing for "serious personalities and the clean."⁶³ At other times, he reconfigured his self-serving goals by invoking older ideals of responsibility. When Warren Harding won the presidency in 1920, he invited Child to Marion, Ohio to discuss possible positions in his administration. Harding's offer was a fulfillment of Child's ambitions, yet Child couched his enthusiasm in selfless terms, writing, "I think it is my duty to go."⁶⁴ In 1934, following a particularly cutthroat, and unsuccessful, bid to gain a prominent position within Franklin Roosevelt's administration, Child wrote in frustration to the president. Drawing on the language of martial sacrifice, Child claimed that, as a Republican, he had "conscientiously . . . enlisted" in the Democrat's election campaign in 1932, and, wanted only "to give of service."⁶⁵ In one sense, Child's invocation of duty was a mask for his baser instincts, functioning, in Adorno et al.'s language, as a "defense mechanism" which kept "important personality needs," such as ambition and power, "out of consciousness."⁶⁶ But Child's avowals of "duty" and

“service” also reflected a wider culture of ambivalence toward modern masculinity, which produced nostalgia for older ideals of honor and self-abnegation.

- 23 Child's identification with Italian fascism was in part a product of his adherence to prevailing gender norms. His stint as ambassador coincided with a period of profound unrest in Italy; members of fascist squads tortured and killed socialists and destroyed their meetinghouses, and in October 1922, the fascists marched on Rome and seized power. Both in personal letters and a memoir serialized in the *Post*, Child constructed himself as a courageous and adventurous man, not unlike the “healthy, lean” *squadristi* whom he so admired.⁶⁷ Child insisted that he was no effete diplomat who sequestered himself behind embassy walls. In the fall of 1921, he wrote to his father that he was “not bothering much” with the “dozens of serious warnings that I would be assassinated.”⁶⁸ Instead, he engaged in verbal sparring matches with anarchists and socialists on the street, and met with a committee of “reds,” although his staff advised him against it for his own safety.⁶⁹ While his role as the United States' top diplomat in Italy prevented Child from inserting himself physically into the fights, he came as close as was possible to violence through risky encounters with leftists. By recounting these anecdotes, he established himself as the young fascists' equivalent—an embodiment of aggressive masculinity.
- 24 Sympathy with the *squadristi* also enabled Child to inject Victorian values of manliness into his own persona. When he praised the fascists for their discipline and sense of duty, he signaled to his reader the values that mattered to him. While future historians would highlight the excesses and cruelties of fascist violence, Child commended the squads for their “tradition of sacrifice, of discipline, of orderly restraint.”⁷⁰ Writing in 1924, he expressed a wistfulness for the “lyric and epic quality” of the early fascist movement. Child evoked a sense of nostalgia to convey his own feelings of remorse that ideals of service, sacrifice, and self-control were waning in the United States.⁷¹ Fascist Italy had “made an extraordinary contribution to the whole world by raising ideals of human courage, discipline and responsibility,” Child said in a speech in Rome which he later relayed to readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*.⁷² By praising the fascists as exemplars of both physical masculinity and moral manliness, Child suggested that he, too, synthesized these two ideals.
- 25 Benito Mussolini, as Child presented him, was also an amalgam of physical masculinity and dutiful manliness. Mussolini was like a movie star: he “bubble[d] with vitality,” Child wrote, in veiled reference to his high libido; his “muscle[d]” face was “suggestive of bronze.” Yet, he was “the first conspicuous leader since [Theodore] Roosevelt” who put “responsibility and obligation higher than claims and rights.”⁷³ References to former president Roosevelt served multiple purposes in Child's text. First, they created a link between *il Duce* and the United States' most prominent representative of manly honor and masculine physicality at a time when Americans were mourning TR's passing. Second, they served to remind the reader of Child's own relationship with Roosevelt, suggesting that he, the former president, and the leader of the fascists were all similar kinds of men. In the foreword to Mussolini's *Autobiography*, Child wrote:
- Mussolini, like Roosevelt, gives the impression of an energy which cannot be bottled, which bubbles up and over like an eternally effervescent, irrepressible fluid. . . . One closes the door when one leaves him, feeling, as when Roosevelt was left, that one could squeeze something of him out of one's clothes.⁷⁴
- 26 The ejaculatory allusions implied both masculine energy and an intimacy suggestive of the strength of Child's connection to these two men. Child's depictions of Mussolini in

the *Post* functioned similarly to affirm his friendship with *il Duce*. Child claimed that Mussolini had been relaxed in his presence, drinking tea together with the ambassador and his wife, Maude Parker, and taking their young daughters onto his knees. In a three-word sentence, Child conveyed how he wanted Americans to perceive his relationship with Mussolini: "We got on."⁷⁵

- 27 Fandom is a form of self-constitution.⁷⁶ Child was a fan of Italian fascism in part because he could construct both the *squadristi* and Benito Mussolini as the kind of men he himself wanted to be. Dominant expectations for white, elite men influenced the language he used to express his appreciation of fascism, which blended notions of modern masculinity with ideals of Victorian manliness. The prevalence of preoccupations with masculinity and manliness in the United States in the 1920s encouraged Child to proffer his support for fascism as evidence of his own worth. My argument does not disprove the psychoanalytical explanations offered by Adorno et al., such as their argument that "distant and stern" fathering led to "over-compensatory toughness" in high F-scale, adult men.⁷⁷ But it does suggest that we need not go so far into Child's psyche to find reasons for his attraction to fascism. A large part of the explanation lay in the culture that surrounded him.

5. Child's Authoritarian Personality as an American Personality

- 28 As demonstrated in the preceding section, Child expressed his appreciation of fascism in a language of masculinity and manliness that was familiar to Americans. This suggests that there was a connective thread running between the gendered culture that had produced Richard Washburn Child and his fascist sympathies. To further explore the ways in which dominant elements within American society and culture normalized Child's philo-fascism, this section examines three aspects of his personality which coincide with recurring traits of the high F-scale type described by Adorno et al.: hostility toward "outgroups"; a dogged pursuit of power; and a "relative absence of self-criticism."⁷⁸ The analysis presented here shows continuities between Child's attitudes and behavior in the United States on one hand, and his views on fascism and actions in Italy on the other. My argument takes up Adorno's own assertion (only briefly articulated in *The Authoritarian Personality* itself) that contemporaneous social and cultural conditions produced potential fascists, by showing the ways that Child's "emotional community" (defined by both the mass culture in which he participated and the elite social circles that he frequented) sanctioned—and even encouraged—his value systems and behavior.⁷⁹
- 29 Mainstream American culture, which in the late 1910s and 1920s was both anti-socialist and anti-immigrant, encouraged insider-outsider mentalities of the kind expressed by Child. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia, followed by a series of post-war strikes in the United States, produced widespread anxiety in the American mainstream about the rise of socialism. As editor of *Collier's* in 1919, Child dismissed striking printers as a "something for nothing' minority."⁸⁰ This was consistent with his characterization of socialists as illegitimate outsiders. As was typical among anti-socialists in the 1920s, Child's animosity toward left-wing radicals overlapped with his hostility toward immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Writing in the *Post*, he decried the new arrivals to the United States as "parasitic," "sneaking," and "explosive" by nature.⁸¹

Child's ideas were not original. George Horace Lorimer, the *Saturday Evening Post's* editor, was ferociously antisocialist and firmly opposed to mass immigration; he required all contributors to his magazine to toe the same line.⁸² In this sense, Child's anti-socialist and anti-immigration positions made him an insider twice over; by expressing hostility to political and ethnic outsiders, he established himself as their opposite, yet at the same time, by aligning himself with Lorimer, he placed himself at the center of American cultural life.

- 30 In praising fascists in terms that were familiar to Americans, Child buttressed his own claims to insider status in the United States. Child voiced approval of the fascists for drawing stark distinctions between those who did and did not belong to Italian society. In contradistinction to the historical record, which demonstrates the seriousness of fascist aggression against both socialists and queer men, Child presented their violence as a form of high jinks, likening the fascist squads to the ultimate social insiders in the United States—members of college fraternities.⁸³ Child characterized fascists' forced-feeding of castor oil to socialists—a humiliating and painful form of torture—as an “amusing” practice, which (like an excessive fraternity hazing ritual) “was soon forbidden by the Fascisti's own regulations.”⁸⁴ Similarly, he recalled the “funny” punishments that fascists inflicted on queer men. In Venice, the *squadristi* “set their gondolas adrift in the Grand Canal without a gondolier,” he wrote.⁸⁵ By ascribing to the fascists the kind of behavior that Americans associated with college youth, Child endowed their violence with both class and élan.⁸⁶ And by suggesting that socialists and queer men could be quashed easily, he compounded their status as outsiders who lacked legitimate claims to power.⁸⁷ Prevalent prejudices and tropes in American culture offered a foundation on which Child built his sympathy for the fascists.
- 31 Child's pursuit (and ostentatious display) of a relationship with Mussolini can also be understood in the context of American society. Child had learned through his own experiences how power circulated in the United States. At every turn of his career, he had strived to ingratiate himself with men who had maximum influence and authority. As a young man, just graduated from college, he aimed to get as close as possible to the leader of the progressives, Theodore Roosevelt.⁸⁸ Seven years later, Child switched from waning progressive politics to the Republican Party and its presidential hopeful—Warren Harding. In a 1921 interview with the *Boston Post*, Child burnished his own reputation by insisting that he and Harding were “fast friends.”⁸⁹ When Harding died of a heart attack in the summer of 1923, Child tried—with much less success—to ingratiate himself with Calvin Coolidge. He dined at the White House and spent an afternoon swimming with the First Lady. But when his efforts resulted in a position of occasional press secretary for the president, he looked for alternative sources of power.⁹⁰ Work at the *Saturday Evening Post* placed him in proximity to Lorimer, whom Child deemed “one of the biggest men” in the United States.⁹¹ Then, in the fall of 1932, sensing the inevitability of Franklin Roosevelt's victory in the pending election, he formed the League of Republicans for Roosevelt, with the aim of ingratiating himself with the Democratic candidate.⁹² Child had learned, through practice, how power operated among elite, white men.
- 32 Child's attachment to Mussolini was, in this sense, produced in the United States. He was conditioned to understand that his own success depended on establishing and brandishing close contacts with other powerful men. His support for *il Duce* placed him in the intellectual and political company of influential figures, including Thomas

Lamont (a major investment banker), Nicholas Murray Butler (the president of Columbia University), and Henry Fletcher and Breckinridge Long (who both came after Child as fascist-friendly US ambassadors to Italy).⁹³ It also boosted his reputation in conservative circles as a “friend of Mussolini, and . . . in some sort the [Duce’s] adviser.”⁹⁴ Even Child’s decision to assume the flagrantly propagandist position as editor of Mussolini’s autobiography can be understood as a product of his US-based power plays. He took the assignment in 1927, when he was a peripheral actor in the Coolidge administration; public association with Europe’s most prominent power figure was perhaps a substitute for a strong connection with the president of the United States.⁹⁵ Child’s inherited privilege and understanding of how power worked led him not only to leaders of every political stripe in the United States, but also to the leader of the fascists in Italy.

- 33 Even Child’s habit of avoiding self-criticism—the F-scale trait that Adorno et al. called “anti-intraception”—had its foundation in his class-, race-, and gender-specific American experience. To illustrate this point, one elaborate example need suffice. Soon after his inauguration in 1933, President Roosevelt offered Child a behind-the-scenes role dealing with dollar-denominated foreign bonds. The low status of the position outraged Child.⁹⁶ One month after this appointment, an acquaintance of Child wrote to the president’s secretary, Marvin McIntyre, (presumably with Child’s knowledge) to warn him of Child’s “intention to attack the President in the [p]ress in the event of the latter’s failure to accord him adequate recognition.”⁹⁷ No one in the administration confronted Child about his heavy-handed extortion campaign. Instead, the administration offered him higher-profile positions: first, as a member of the committee that welcomed the fascist aviator Italo Balbo to Chicago in the summer of 1933; then as a roving economic ambassador to Europe.⁹⁸ Upon his return from this official trip to Europe in the summer of 1934, Child launched a no-holds-barred attack on the New Deal in the press.⁹⁹ In the meantime, he travelled repeatedly from his home in New York City to the White House, with the expectation that Roosevelt would meet with him. Child’s letters to Roosevelt that summer had much of the “self-pity” that Adorno et al. associated with anti-intraception, and not an iota of self-criticism.¹⁰⁰ He penned:

I have written you often—I have no replies. I do not know whether you receive my letters. I do not know how much you are—like many foreign and domestic administrators I have known—kept away from knowledge.

I do not expect you to read this letter—

Not now—

Some day—

I am ready to help you, but not by any loss of self-respect.¹⁰¹

- 34 The president’s response was a testimony to Roosevelt’s notorious two-faced charm, as well as the failure of any of Child’s peers to hold him to account:

Dear Dick:

I am a little surprised by your letter because . . . I did not know that you had asked to see me. . . .

Some day I hope that you will come to see me, as I should much like to have your thoughts on a number of matters—as for instance, the pending European situation which does not seem to grow easier with the passage of time.

I am telling Mr. McIntyre to be sure to let me know if you want to talk to me and to arrange a time.¹⁰²

35 Child travelled back to Washington again to meet with the president in January 1935. Roosevelt once more avoided him. Child wrote another letter bristling with indignation and a sense of victimhood.¹⁰³ Even the president of the United States never forced Richard Washburn Child to own up to who he really was. In such an environment, it was easy for authoritarian personality types to thrive.

6. Conclusion: Authoritarian Personalities Past, Present, and Future

36 This article has proposed an approach to understanding the provenance of the authoritarian personality type that does not depend on the psychoanalytical explanations emphasized by Theodor Adorno and his co-authors in their 1950 study. Building on Adorno's own argument (which was insufficiently articulated in *The Authoritarian Personality* itself to garner the attention of most readers) that social and cultural forces shaped personalities, this article has investigated how Richard Washburn Child's "emotional community" (comprising of WASP elites, yet informed by a mass culture to which he contributed) laid the foundation for qualities that Adorno et al. associated with potential fascism, including: masculine "toughness," a punitive attitude toward "outgroups," avid—although often masked—ambition, and a lack of self-criticism.¹⁰⁴ Child absorbed early twentieth-century discourses about masculinity and manliness that lent themselves to support for the fascist squads and Mussolini. He reproduced prevalent anti-socialist, anti-immigrant, and homophobic ideologies and parlayed them into an insider-outsider *Weltanschauung* that was consistent with fascism. Child learned through experience that his own success depended on his attachments to powerful men—from American presidents to the Italian dictator. His behavior, even at its worst, was sufficiently within the boundaries set by his peers to persist without overt sanction. If, in Adorno et al.'s words, Child failed to examine the "conditions or determinants of his own behavior," it was partly because nobody around him forced him to.¹⁰⁵

37 Although the insights drawn from the histories of gender and emotions sustain, and expand upon, Adorno's view that social and cultural forces helped to produce authoritarian personalities, these same bodies of scholarship ought to make us skeptical of his suggestion that this personality type was inextricably embedded in modernity.¹⁰⁶ Adorno's idea was a deeply pessimistic one because it implied that the authoritarian personality was immune to change. Superficially, there is, of course, plenty of evidence to support this idea: the success of authoritarian leaders in the contemporary United States, Hungary, and Brazil suggests continuities in authoritarian personality types from the interwar years until today. But continuities are not the same thing as calcification. While Adorno presented "the culture industry" as inherently homogenizing, historians since the late 1980s have demonstrated that mass culture was "neither monolithic nor unrelentingly repressive"; various social groups adapted and embellished mass culture, ensuring that the forces of modernity were not impregnable to change.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, historians of gender and emotions have demonstrated how non-elite groups challenged normative masculinity and femininity and their associated "emotional regimes."¹⁰⁸ For instance, historians of early twentieth-century masculinity have analyzed how women and non-white men repurposed and undermined normative standards of white male virility, assertiveness, and aggression.¹⁰⁹ Even hegemonic

masculinity, by this conception, was shaped and reshaped, changeable and changing. Rather than resulting in a static personality type, historians of gender and emotions suggest that groups of people—frequently those who are marginalized—destabilize dominant discourses.¹¹⁰ Similarities between Richard Washburn Child's personality, Adorno's high F-scale type, and authoritarian personalities today are a product of continuities in enabling environments. People make and unmake enabling environments, and modernity, too, can change.

NOTES

1. T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Verso, 2019).
2. David Jenemann, "'Nothing is True Except the Exaggerations': The Legacy of *The Authoritarian Personality*," in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. Peter E. Gordon (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2020), 282.
3. Many of Child's non-fiction articles were republished in book form. See: Richard Washburn Child, *A Diplomat Looks at Europe* (New York: Duffield, 1925); Child, *Battling the Criminal* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1925); Child, *The Writing on the Wall: Who Shall Govern Us Next* (New York: Sears, 1929).
4. Benito Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, ed. Richard Washburn Child (New York: Scribner's, 1928).
5. Richard Washburn Child to Theodore Roosevelt, August 24, 1912, Folder: 1881-1919, Reel 1, Richard Washburn Child Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as RWCP).
6. These biographical details can be found in: Katy Hull, *The Machine Has a Soul: American Sympathy with Italian Fascism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 6-8, 94.
7. Gian Giacomo Migone, *Gli Stati Uniti e il fascismo: alle origini dell'egemonia americana in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980).
8. David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Fascist Italy, 1922-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
9. John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 73.
10. Hull, *Machine Has a Soul*.
11. *Ibid.*, 56-57.
12. T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 255-57.
13. *Ibid.*, 54.
14. *Ibid.*, 55.
15. *Ibid.*, 808.
16. *Ibid.*, 50.
17. Lars Rensmann, *The Politics of Unreason: The Frankfurt School and the Origins of Modern Antisemitism* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 2017), 71.
18. Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (New York: Knopf, 1982); Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).
19. Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948).

20. Peter E. Gordon, introduction to *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno et al. (New York: Verso, 2019), xxiv-xxvii.
21. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 11-27.
22. The contrast between the “surface attitudes” measured by the E, A-S, and PEC scales and personality traits measured by the F scale can be appreciated by these two representative statements: “Anyone who employs many people should be careful not to hire a large percentage of Jews” (A-S scale); “If people would talk less and work more, everybody would be better off” (F scale). *Ibid.*, 84, 255-56, 787.
23. *Ibid.*, 305.
24. *Ibid.*, 788-808, esp. 800.
25. Nathan G. Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 245-99.
26. “Dictators in Home Breed Bigots, New Study Finds,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, April 15, 1950; “Authoritarian Needs Someone to Boss Him,” *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, July 16, 1950; “‘Authoritarian Personality’ Called Teen Trouble Cause,” *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, January 22, 1960.
27. H. Edwin Titus and E. P. Hollander, “The California F Scale in Psychological Research: 1950-1955,” *Psychological Bulletin* 54, no. 1 (January 1957): 47-64.
28. J. M. Masling, “How Neurotic is the Authoritarian?” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 49, no. 2 (April 1954): 316-18; S. J. Meer, “Authoritarian Attitudes and Dreams,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 51, no. 1 (July 1955): 74-78.
29. Richard Hofstadter “The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt,” in *The New American Right*, ed. Daniel Bell (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), 35. Hofstadter quoted Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 675.
30. Martin Roiser and Carla Willig, “The Strange Death of the Authoritarian Personality: 50 Years of Psychological and Political Debate,” *History of the Human Sciences* 15, no. 4 (October 2002): 78-79.
31. Bob Altemeyer, *The Authoritarian Specter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 47; Hale, *Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, 300-79.
32. Ribuffo, *Old Christian Right*, 238. Ribuffo was less critical of *The Authoritarian Personality* itself than he was of those scholars who had failed to recognize the complexity of Adorno et al.’s arguments.
33. Federico Finchelstein, “*The Authoritarian Personality* and the History of Fascism,” *Polity* 54, no. 1 (January 2022): 107-23, esp. 109.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Gordon, introduction to *Authoritarian Personality*, xxxii-xxxiv.
36. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido 1947); T. W. Adorno, “Remarks on *The Authoritarian Personality*” (1948), in *Authoritarian Personality*, by Adorno et al. (2019), xlii.
37. Theodor W. Adorno, “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda” (1951), in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed.s Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Urizen, 1978), 118-137, esp. 136.
38. Joan W. Scott “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-75, esp. 1067.
39. Particularly relevant for this article are: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).
40. Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Scott, “Gender,” 1063.
41. Ute Frevert, “ISRE’s Sourcebook for Research on Emotion and Affect,” accessed February 23, 2023, <http://emotionresearcher.com/historicizing-emotions/>.

42. Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (October, 1985): 813-36.
43. Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.
44. See also: Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History: Lost and Found* (New York: Central European University Press, 2011), 87-147; John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).
45. G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 71-78.
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47. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 802.
48. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 232, 256; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 222-46.
49. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 266-68. Some of this differential was due to surveys of men in male-exclusive spaces (San Quentin prison, a navy school, and Rotary and Kiwanis clubs) where participants scored particularly high on the F scale. But Adorno et al. noted that even in the case of directly comparable male and female groups, men still scored marginally higher than women.
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51. Promissory Note, November, 1, 1921, Folder: Bills and Receipts, Reel 1, RWCP.
52. "Richard Washburn Child, Onetime Lamponer, Dies," *Harvard Crimson*, February 1, 1935.
53. "Richard Washburn Child," in *Harvard College Class of 1903; Quindecennial Report* (Norwood, MA: Plimpton Press, 1920), 51.
54. Thomson, "Child"; Maude Parker, "One of the Free," *Smart Set*, December 1922. Child married four times in total. Hull, *Machine Has a Soul*, 56.
55. "Society" *Evening Star*, August 1, 1934.
56. Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*; John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2001).
57. Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 17, 77, 101, 182, 200; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 119-22, 230-31.
58. Warren I. Susman, "Culture Heroes: Ford, Barton, Ruth," in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 122-49.
59. Richard Washburn Child to Horace Walter Child, September 2, 1906, Folder: General Correspondence, 1909-24, Reel 1, RWCP.
60. Richard Washburn Child to Horace Walter Child, [Late September], 1923, Folder: 1923-24, Reel 2, RWCP.
61. Richard Washburn Child to Horace Walter Child, August 5, 1923, Folder: 1923-24, Reel 2, RWCP.
62. Richard Washburn Child to Horace Washburn Child, February 13, 1924, Folder: 1923-24, Reel 2, RWCP.
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65. Richard Washburn Child to Franklin D. Roosevelt, August 30, 1934, President's Personal File 1760, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York (hereafter cited as FDRL).
66. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 55.
67. Child, *Diplomat Looks at Europe*, 166; Child, "The Making of Mussolini," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 28, 1924.
68. Richard Washburn Child to Horace Walter Child, November 5, 1921, Folder: "1920-21," Reel 2, RWCP.

69. Child, *Diplomat Looks at Europe*, 162; Child, "Making of Mussolini."
70. Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Child, *Diplomat Looks at Europe*, 170; Child, "Making of Mussolini."
71. Child, *Diplomat Looks at Europe*, 177; Child, "What Does Mussolini Mean?" *Saturday Evening Post*, July 26, 1924.
72. "Embassy Weekly," June 30, 1923, 865/1239, Record Group 59, Microcopy 527, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; paraphrased in Child, "What Does Mussolini Mean?"
73. Child, *Diplomat Looks at Europe*, 85, 204, 208, 226-27; Child, "What Does Mussolini Mean?"
74. Child, foreword to Mussolini's *My Autobiography*, xviii-xix.
75. Child, "Making of Mussolini," Child, "What Does Mussolini Mean?"
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77. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 359-60, 802.
78. *Ibid.*, 233, 237-38, 805.
79. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*.
80. Richard Washburn Child to Horace Walter Child, October 14, [1919], Folder: General Correspondence, 1925-27; Reel 1, RWCP.
81. Richard Washburn Child, "Whose Country Is This?" *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1926; Child, "The Great American Scandal—Why We Have Crime," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 15, 1925.
82. Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 132-33, 144-51, 153-56. For a sample of this journalism, see: Kenneth Roberts, "Guests from Italy," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 21, 1920; Lothrop Stoddard, "Lo, the Poor American," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 6, 1923.
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85. Child, *Diplomat Looks at Europe*, 185, 195; Child, "Open the Gates."
86. As noted by Hull, "Since the Boston police strike of 1919, when Harvard students volunteered as strikebreakers, the student as an upper-class hero in the war against radicals was a familiar image for Americans." Hull, *Machine Has a Soul*, 32.
87. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 41, 46-47. Adorno et al. noted frequently that high F-scale personalities attributed "immorality" and "weakness" to "outgroups."
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90. Richard Washburn Child to Susan Sawyer Child and Horace Walter Child, [July 1926?], Folder: 1925-30, Reel 2, RWCP; Richard Washburn Child to Horace Walter Child, February 13, 1924, Folder: 1923-24, Reel 2, RWCP; "Coolidge Will Be a Candidate, Says R. W. Child," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 30, 1926.
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97. E. Paul Yaselli to Marvin McIntyre, May 10, 1933, Folder: Child, Richard Washburn, President's Personal File 1760, FDRL.
98. Richard Washburn Child to Marvin McIntyre, July 11, 1933, Folder: Child, Richard Washburn, President's Personal File 1760, FDRL; "Hull Sends Envoy for a Trade Study," *New York Times*, March 6, 1934. While Child was on official business in Italy, rumors reached back to the White House that he was meeting with the conservative publisher, Frank Knox, to negotiate payment for anti-New Deal news articles. Breckinridge Long to Franklin D. Roosevelt, May 23, 1934, Folder: Diplomatic Correspondence Italy, Long, Breckinridge: 1933-1936, President's Secretary's File 41, FDRL.
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100. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 48.
101. Richard Washburn Child to Franklin D. Roosevelt, August 30, 1934, Folder: Child, Richard Washburn, President's Personal File 1760, FDRL.
102. Franklin D. Roosevelt to Richard Washburn Child, September 4, 1934, Folder: Child, Richard Washburn, President's Personal File 1760, FDRL.
103. Richard Washburn Child to Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 12, 1935, Folder: Child, Richard Washburn, President's Personal File 1760, FDRL.
104. Adorno et al., *Authoritarian Personality*, 225, 237.
105. *Ibid.*, 808.
106. Gordon, introduction to *Authoritarian Personality*, xxxvii-xl.
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ABSTRACTS

The personality of Richard Washburn Child, who was the US ambassador to Italy from 1921 to 1924, bears a close resemblance to the potential fascist described by Theodor Adorno et al. in *The Authoritarian Personality*. Instead of the psychoanalytical explanations favored in the 1950 study, this article uses theories developed by historians of gender and emotions to understand Child's personality. It shows how Child's "emotional community" (which was populated by social elites but also informed by mass culture) fostered his aggressive masculinity, chauvinism, hyper-ambition, and a lack of self-criticism. These personality traits in turn lent themselves to Child's support of Mussolini and Italian fascism. This research suggests that the authoritarian

personality type is neither ahistorical nor an indelible feature of modernity, but a product of specific enabling communities.

INDEX

Keywords: authoritarian personality, authoritarianism, emotions, fascism, gender, Italy, masculinity, modernity

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