INTRODUCTION *The Search for Norma*

> She is modelled from recent measurements of 15,000 women from many parts of the United States and from various walks of life, including series of college students and other thousands of native white Americans. She is slightly heavier yet more "athletic" than her grandmother of 1890 and has lost the shrunken waist induced by tight corsets. As to the beauty of her figure, tastes will vary; fashions change ideals from one generation to the next. Norma is not meant to show what ought to be; she shows what is.
>
> "A Portrait of the American People,"
> *Natural History*, June 1945

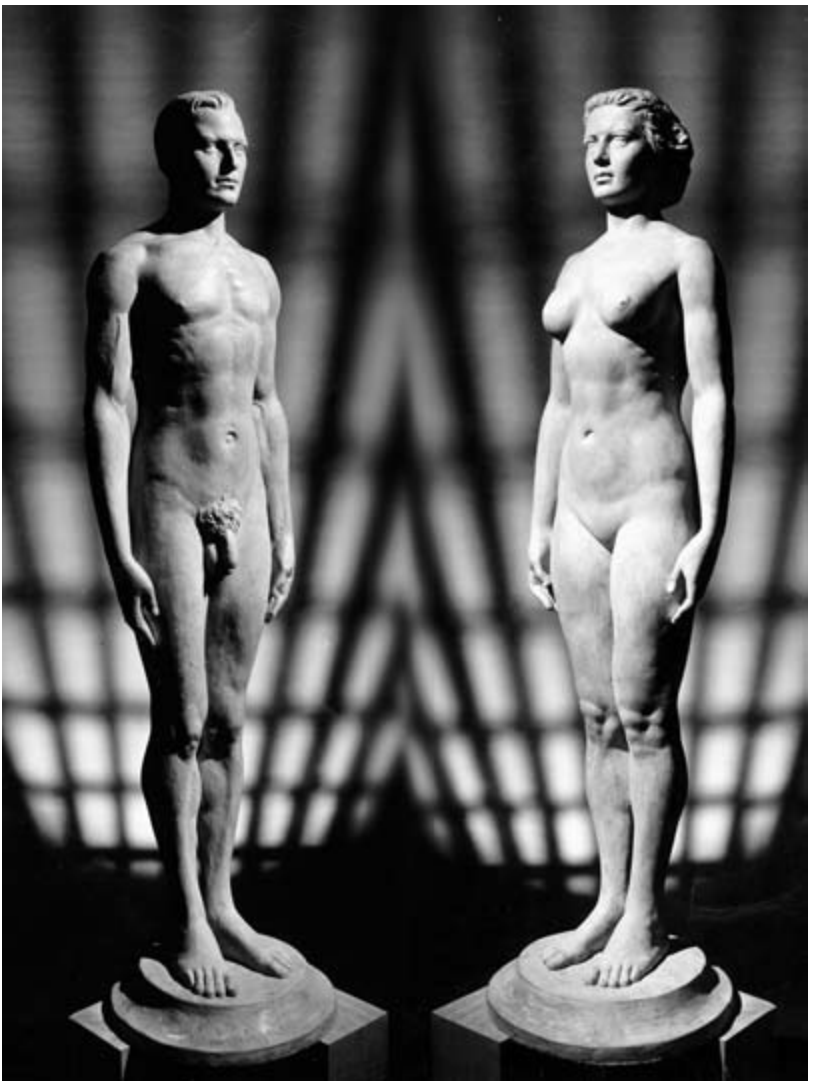
With these words "NORMA—the average American girl" was introduced to the public in the summer of 1945. Her body was straight and strong, her arms were relaxed at her sides, and she looked directly ahead with the level, proud gaze of heroic statuary. Her stance proclaimed her right to a prominent place in "A Portrait of the American People," cast in plaster and on display in the Cleveland Health Museum. The portrait was a flattering one. Norma was young, healthy, and unashamed, and she was as "normal" as the combined forces of science and art could make her. That is, her curves and planes were three-dimensional renderings of the statistical "norm or average American woman of 18 to 20 years of age."[1] Norma was an emblem of the national body, modern era, sexed female.

Norma was escorted by Normman, a strapping youth available with or without a fig leaf. His figure incorporated the measurements of several million twenty-year-old Doughboys, as well as those of young men in the

Ivy League.[2] Together, this upright pair embodied the triumphant progress of the years between 1890 and 1940. Norma and Normman were heirs to a modern world in which "improved nutrition, better care of our young, and advances in public health" promised increased stature and strength to the nation as a whole.[3] They represent this book's major theme: the early-twentieth-century emergence of the ideal of the "normal" American, through which a particular kind of person came to be perceived as uniquely modern, uniquely qualified for citizenship, uniquely natural and healthy.

This modern, normal person was defined in large part through a powerfully racialized understanding of sexuality: Norma and Normman represented an ideal of specifically heterosexual whiteness, not simply a statistical composite of the American people. The statues dramatize the connection between "normal" modes of erotic intimacy and important cultural meanings of "whiteness" forged in the United States between the two world wars. This is so despite the fact that, at first glance, the statues appear reticent both about sexuality and about race. The article in which this introduction's epigraph appears mentions race only once, in its passing reference to "native white Americans"; popular newspaper coverage of Norma and Normman made no comment about race at all. Neither do such discussions make many overt references to sexuality. Yet the following chapters demonstrate that Norma and Normman should be understood as icons of a constitutively white kind of heterosexual eroticism in marriage. The normality they represented was inseparable from their race, at the same time that it was formed and expressed through rich cultural codes that gradually rendered overtly racial language redundant in many white-dominated contexts. These "race-evasive" codes took shape in the last decades of the nineteenth century and achieved tremendous power during the 1920s and 1930s.[4] By 1945, when Norma and Normman made their debut, important elements of white racial identity were conventionally communicated through discreet depictions of normal sexuality. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the "normal" whiteness these statues represented was the ability to construct and teach white racial meanings *without appearing to do so*.

The subsequent chapters analyze the discourses of modern sexuality through which whiteness became normalized and, thereby, hard to see. My argument is rooted in widely disseminated print sources which document the gradual discursive elision of white raciality in favor of discussions of marital love. These sources show that that elision took place through the rise



1. Normman and Norma, the "Average American Boy and Girl." Terra-cotta statues displayed at 1939 New York World's Fair. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF HEALTHSPACE CLEVELAND.

of the concept of the normal in the early twentieth century. Normality discourse drew on and extended several earlier conceptual vocabularies, especially those of civilization and evolution, in a way which made it possible to talk about whiteness indirectly, in terms of the affectionate, reproductive heterosexuality of "normal" married couples. That is, "normality" made it

possible to discuss race and sexuality without engaging the relations of power in which they were embedded and through which they acquired much of their relevance.

The "power-evasiveness" of normality originates in, though it is not restricted to, its mathematical meaning. In a statistical sense, "norms" are clusters of regularly recurring facts about a given phenomenon or population. The "normality" of those facts, within a statistical universe, exists only in their distribution and makes no reference to any quality of those facts beyond their occurrence. That is why *Natural History* could claim that Norma and Normman did not represent "what ought to be," only "what is." Yet Francis Galton, who is widely credited with having founded the modern study of statistics in 1864, did so in large part in order "to study social mass changes in man with a view to controlling the evolution of man, as man controls that of many living forms."[5] From its inception, then, modern "normality" involved both a positivistic claim about the pure neutrality of facts, and a distinctly eugenic element of judgment about which human bodies and behaviors were best. It also involved what would turn out to be a productive definitional confusion between what is common and what is ideal: for Galton and many of his colleagues, it was important to know what was ordinary, frequent, or common precisely so that one could shift the norm in the direction of the ideal. The power-evasive, the eugenically evaluative, and the definitionally confused elements of "normality" retained their importance well into the twentieth century. But Norma and Normman did not spring full-blown from Galton's forehead. As normality discourse entered U.S. popular culture in the early twentieth century, it drew on well-established conventions for representing conflict over issues of race, citizenship, and cultural reproduction through the language of "civilization."

Gail Bederman has demonstrated that between 1880 and 1917 civilization discourse provided a shared vocabulary in which Americans at every point of the political spectrum could argue for and against the legitimacy of the unequal distribution of power according to race, gender, and sexuality.[6] By 1940 "normality" described some of the same cultural terrain, and performed some of the same cultural work, that "civilization" performed in the first decades of the century. In fact, we will see that "normality" was deeply indebted to "civilization" for its conceptual content; normal Americans were necessarily civilized ones, and the two terms were sometimes used in the interwar years as though they were synonyms. But while their contents

overlapped, their effects were significantly different. Where civilization discourse could facilitate political debate, the following chapters show that normality discourse generally worked to shut it down.

One of the most important effects of the concept of "normality," and the sign of its power in dominant American culture, was the increasing occlusion of racial and sexual politics in "polite" white speech.[7] Civilization discourse had often attempted to foster a similar illusion of peaceful, apolitical consensus about what it meant to be an American. It was quite common for late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century, native-born, bourgeois Protestant whites to use "civilization" as a sort of shorthand for "the way well-bred people like us do things." When that shorthand was contested and its race-political agenda challenged, many whites responded by trying to remove their claim to ownership of the nation from political discourse.

They did this by appealing to the apparently neutral authority of evolutionary science. Evolution, as it was popularly understood in this era, explained the progressive development of peoples and nations from generation to generation. It was therefore an immensely attractive conceptual resource for racism. While evolutionism's interest in explaining change allowed for the argument that modern civilization was a natural improvement over "primitive" forms, its emphasis on continuity across time facilitated the position that American civilization was the hereditable property of the modern white persons whose ancestors had founded the original thirteen colonies. It is no accident that evolutionism had its widest and deepest reach in U.S. culture between the Civil War and the Civil Rights era.[8] Even though the language of civilization could be mobilized in overtly political contexts, evolutionist perspectives on civilization implied that social inequality—the dominance of native-born, financially secure, educated white men—was determined by heredity and so was beyond the bounds of meaningful dissent.

Representations of modern American civilization as an evolutionary achievement, in short, record the attempted depoliticization of white dominance in response to challenges to the entrenched racial order. This is where sex comes in. Because evolutionary thought emphasizes reproduction as the vector for inheritance and therefore as the primary mechanism for racial development or degeneration, an evolutionist perspective on civilization drew attention to the importance of a specifically sexual "fitness" among modern whites.[9] During the era between the two world wars, that evolved sexual fitness increasingly went by the name of "normality."

In the evolutionist context of its emergence, "normality" shared some important qualities with eugenics, the theory and practice of racial improvement through the reproduction of "desirable" elements of the population. Both normality discourse and eugenics drew on social-Darwinist vocabularies of development and degeneration to argue for the immense importance of correct sexual behavior, especially among the "better classes" of whites; both presented their vision of sexual control for the good of the race as though it was simple common sense based on objective scientific fact. But normality, unlike eugenicism or civilizationism, managed to acquire a mantle of political neutrality that remained powerful at least through the end of the twentieth century and that retains its dominance in many areas of U.S. culture to the present day. This book has two chief goals: first, to document the disavowed and mutually dependent racial and sexual hierarchies condensed in the notion of the normal; and second, to show that normality discourse appeared to be politically neutral in large part because it so often framed its racially loaded dreams for the reproduction of white civilization in the language of romantic and familial love.

In common speech during the interwar years, "normality" described a whole series of ideals regulating sexual desires and activities and, through them, modes of intimacy and familial structures. By 1940, this enframement had had the effect of helping to expand white racial definition to include most European Americans who adhered to these racialized sexual and relational norms. Erotically and affectively charged marriage became the privileged site for the literal and metaphorical reproduction of white civilization. At the same time and through the same gestures, that civilization's core racial value was redefined in terms of love. Though the statistical referent of the normal helped make its claim to neutrality plausible, it is as significant that the actual contents of the category were extremely difficult to contest: love was, by dominant cultural definition, an inherently benign force, politically relevant only in its ability to resolve conflict.[10] "Normality" thus provided a common, and deeply sexualized, vocabulary through which an increasingly diverse group of whites could articulate their common racial and political values to one another, while nonetheless avoiding direct acknowledgment of or confrontation with the many hierarchies that fractured the polity. The rise of the notion of the "normal" to discursive dominance was a crucial part of the process by which whiteness became not only reticent about its racial meanings but blind to its own struggles to retain racial power.

The Sexual Reproduction of Civilization and the Political Innocence of Whiteness

The statues of the "normal" American boy and girl illustrate the way in which vague references to heredity and cultural development across generations could forge an ostensibly natural, objective, and politically innocent connection between whiteness, reproductive marital heterosexuality, and modern American civilization. Press discussions of Norma and Normman document the widespread belief that "normal" twentieth-century Americans were biologically and culturally superior to all other peoples. Harry Shapiro, curator of physical anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, made this point explicit when he described the statues as manifestations of general "improvements" in the "physical development of the population" since the 1890s.[11] In Shapiro's account, as in many others, changes in the body were inseparable from changes in civilization. The slippage by which evaluations of physical development became evidence of cultural advance can be seen in Shapiro's comment that "both of these statues . . . leave little doubt that the figure is improving esthetically. . . . The average American figure approaches a kind of perfection of bodily form and proportion."[12] Modern, white Americans—"normal" people "like us"—were simply better than anyone else had ever been.

Shapiro's declaration of aesthetic progress merged with his celebration of the normal American body to suggest that the steady development of civilization to ever-higher levels could not be separated from the sexual health of native-born whites. Certainly it mattered to Shapiro and his readers that, by midcentury, "normal" Americans were comparatively safe from syphilis, polio, tuberculosis, and other diseases that had reached epidemic proportions in the late nineteenth century. But in terms of the future of the race, Norma and Normman's individual health was significant primarily as it influenced their reproductivity. Furthermore, because biological reproduction and cultural reproduction were equally necessary to the evolution of civilization, the health of what one might call their mode of reproduction was as important as their freedom from literal illness. The statues are material condensations of the widely held belief that the evolutionary triumph of modern civilization depended on and found expression in a particular normalized form of marital heterosexuality.

Just in case some readers needed a refresher course in the cultural logic

through which normal marriage both represented and enabled the reproduction of white civilization, Shapiro developed his claim about the natural superiority of modern Americans with the aid of several small photographs representing Norma and Normman's family tree. First came pictures of their plaster "grandparents." These icons of bourgeois Victorian gentility were statistical composites based on measurements from the 1890s. The lady exhibits "the shrunken waist induced by tight corsets" and inclines slightly toward her male companion as though they are conversing in modulated tones at some formal social occasion. Their civilized whiteness is evident in their features, but above all in their refined bearing.[13] The second pair of images depicts the mythical progenitors of western civilization in the form of the Doryphorus of Polycletus —better known as the Canon—and a voluptuous (though headless) Aphrodite.[14] Together, the photographs constitute a sort of family album documenting the increasing perfection of white civilization.

The six statues record the progressive development of whiteness by contrasting the aesthetic and physical ideals of past generations to those of the present. The ancient statues share an impressive, if rather bulky, muscularity. They look up to the task of laying the foundations of western civilization. Harry Shapiro observed that ancient Greek statuary reflected the archaic sensibilities of its creators, who valued "power rather than agility or speed."[15] The Victorian pair, in contrast, are slender and graceful. They represent elegance and polish rather than strength. Finally, Shapiro described Norma and Normman as longer-legged, more dynamic forms than their racial predecessors.[16] As moderns, Norma and Normman inherited both strength and elegance from earlier eras of white civilization: they are muscular *and* slender, powerful *and* streamlined. Though they share racial / cultural traits with their forbears, they have also surpassed them. The normal civilized whiteness they represent is a uniquely modern one, and as such it is an evolutionary improvement over its own racial antecedents.

Viewed on their own, Norma and Normman can be taken for siblings. When they are situated in a visual narrative of the evolution of racial ideals, however, it seems clear that they represent mates, the ideal parents for the new generation of civilized whites. The nakedness of all six statues is therefore not an empty nod to the artistic tradition of the classical nude. Rather, that nakedness foregrounds sexual difference and the importance of the sexual reproduction of the racial family. Across the millennia, Shapiro's pictures suggest, white civilization has advanced through fruitful intercourse

between matched pairs of its best men and women. Because they were exemplary of a civilized sexual ideal, the presumption was that those reproductive couples were married; in any case, they had to be if their children were to be legitimate heirs of civilization. In short, the photographs illustrating Shapiro's essay in *Natural History* provided Norma and Normman with a high lineage of biological whiteness transmitted through marital heterosexuality. It is not incidental that the same representational gesture provided American civilization with a similarly lofty line of direct descent from the original democracy.[17]

Taken together, the three sets of statues constitute a visual argument that modern American civilization was the legitimately inherited, morally upright racial property of "normal" whites. Norma and Normman were embedded in a history of racially pure sexual reproduction that Shapiro collapsed into the developmental history of white civilization. These emblems of normality, that is, are also representations of the legitimacy and innocence of white dominance. Eons of material and cultural advances, transmitted via the marital sexuality of successive white generations, produced normal moderns organically rather than agonistically. Shapiro's use of the Athenian marbles to represent the origins of white civilization underscores whiteness's insistence on its commitment to and talent for democratic justice, while the collapse of cultural development into sexual reproduction constitutes an implicit argument that white civilization has progressed through the cultivation of marital love. In this narrative of civilization's evolutionary development, just self-government is a transhistorical matrix in which sex replaces struggle, marriage replaces race and class war, and the cultural and political life of the modern United States appear to be white property by nature and without conflict. This narrative suggests that the disavowal of political struggle over power was not epiphenomenal but central to normal whiteness.

The claim that political virtue was a continuous racial quality across the millennia helped to anchor white racial meaning in a politically innocent discursive space. It did not, however, mean that the race had not evolved since the fifth century BCE. The epigraph to this chapter emphasizes that the statues embodied "what is": Anglo America in the present tense. Norma and Normman were at the top of the evolutionary tree not only because they were white but because they were modern. As representatives of the mid-twentieth-century United States, an apartheid state which increasingly

staked its identity and international status on its commitment to democracy, their whiteness was necessarily more inclusive of class and ethnic variation than that of earlier eras—that is, it was less restrictively defined by reference to high Anglo culture. When Norma and Normman moved from their creator's New York studio to their Ohio exhibition hall, a local daily paper ran a series of articles that underscore the statues' ability to represent the development of white civilization as though it were a steady procession toward enlightenment and freedom for all European Americans, not only native-born WASP elites. In one such article the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* contrasted the statues' athletic nudity to the overdressed and constrained Victorianism of the 1890s, when, it wrote, "Norma's Gym Suit . . . Covered All." The statues bore testimony to recent changes in "type of clothes, in attitudes toward women's freedom, in concepts of physical education, in public opinion."[18] Norma and Normman embodied civilization's progress toward freedom on a local, mundane level, easily accessible to those who were more excited by college basketball than by the remote glory that was Greece.

The belief that modern whiteness was uniquely egalitarian was nicely captured by the director of physical education at Western Reserve University, who summed up her response to Norma and Normman in these words: "As was said by the old mountaineer who lived in a town where a church and a school had been created for the first time, 'We ain't what we ought to be and we ain't what we're goin' to be, but thank God we ain't what we was.' "[19] The PE teacher saw Norma and Normman's magnificently white bodies as analogous to church and school, the core public institutions through which American civilization's ideological structures were both perpetuated and improved. The claim that the "normal" American boy and girl represent the same kind of progress as the founding of churches and schools confirms the sociopolitical importance of the married heterosexual pair. It also suggests "universal" access to normality: if being married was the prime qualification for transmitting civilization, literally millions of healthy, nominally Christian or at least morally conventional, reasonably well-informed modern heterosexual whites fit the bill. Further, the "old mountaineer' "s pious celebration of civilized institutions implies the inclusivity, the cross-class relevance, of the white ideals that the statues represent in a more rarified and abstract way. Shapiro's highbrow depiction of Norma and Normman's family tree collapsed political virtue into the legitimate reproduction of white civilization; the *Plain Dealer*'s more colloquial approach to racial history invited

whites with less lofty genealogies to identify themselves with the march of national progress. Even if your grandfather said "ain't" you could still be normal.

At mass-cultural as on elite levels, then, normality discourse used the common cultural vocabulary of civilization's evolutionary progress in a way that tended to flatten out the distinction between political struggle and natural development. The folksy depiction of progress suggested that white domination over the American land was both natural and moral, while it concealed the genocidal violence of Native Americans' removal from the Old West by the simple device of ignoring it. The *Plain Dealer*'s stories about the development of civilization also depoliticized and naturalized half a century of intense struggle over (white) women's role in the polity: the long and bitter fight for women's education and suffrage is reduced to an unmotivated "shift in attitude," while modern women's "freedom" is illustrated by the rise in hemlines.

Yet while the real exercise of military and political agency as motors for historical change is disavowed, the *Plain Dealer* celebrates the bare physical existence of church and schoolhouse as a sign of modern civilization's achievement of liberty and justice for all. The net effect of such flattening, combined with the occlusion of racial violence and oppression, was to make the dominance of white civilization seem both natural and worth striving for—in short, to make whiteness normal. Whether it was represented in noble statuary or down-home colloquialisms, normal modern whiteness invoked the democratic dream of universal access to enlightened morality and free self-government, while it looked away from the struggles through which American government and white dominance were extended across the continent and, increasingly, across the globe.

Instead, normality discourse tended to focus on marriage, love, and babies. The importance of a carefully disciplined reproductivity to the continued progress of the race is captured in another headline from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*: "Norma's Husband Better Be Good," it trumpeted. "Evolution Outlook Bright if Model Girl Weds Wisely."[20] Under this banner, the newspaper quoted a professor of biology's opinion that "rational . . . principles in mating" could eradicate "many of the ills that human flesh is heir to." With "proper selection in matrimony," the professor added, there was every reason to believe that future generations would "just keep on improving physically and mentally."[21] In such representations, modern civilization de-

veloped through the cultivation of marriage. Normal Americans, by definition, were whites who used their respectably reproductive sexuality for the betterment of race and nation.

From Civilized Nervousness to Modern Marriage

The subsequent chapters address distinct, though related, dimensions of the concept of the normal, first as its basic contours began to emerge among educated Anglo whites in the 1880s, and then as it expanded into mass culture during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Chapter 1 engages the late-nineteenth-century medical formulation of a particular kind of white body as the somaticization of modern civilization. I read theoretical, clinical, and popular narrative representations of nervous illness as constituting an attempt to define and describe the core essence of whiteness in the post-slavery United States. The literature on neurasthenia shows that the disease, and the sexual failures associated with it, indirectly expressed widespread white beliefs that the "cultured classes" were in danger of losing their inherited dominance over American life. Nervousness discourse therefore provides a window into "old stock" white fears that the best, most socially valuable part of the race was rendered physically and morally sterile by its extreme sensitivity, such that bourgeois whiteness might fail to reproduce itself and its civilization.

Norma and Normman's plaster "grandparents" of the 1890s provide a useful visual index of this construction of civilized whiteness as weakness: in contrast to the ancient Athenians and the modern Americans, the Victorian statues look enfeebled by their gentility. In neurasthenia discourse, the fear of white sterility found expression in exhortations to men and women of the "better sort" to preserve white dominance over civilization by cultivating sexual self-control. Sexual restraint enabled them to harness their sensitivity to the future of the race, directing their nervous resources toward the production of the next white generation. At the same time, the construction of whiteness as weakness helped to gloss over the social, political, and economic benefits whites gained from the real racial maldistribution of national resources.

The literature that describes neurasthenia does not use the language of normality, but in its representations of civilized whiteness we can see the convergence of many of the images and themes that would come to have definitional power in early-twentieth-century representations of whiteness

as normal. Two of these were especially important. The first was an intensification of interest in marital sexuality as the central point or node for the legitimate reproduction of white civilization. Second was the discursive depoliticization of white dominance through the conflation of whiteness with the evolutionary development of ever-greater capacities for sexual sensitivity, responsiveness, egalitarianism, and love, a conflation which made it very difficult for whites to perceive their racial position in terms of oppression, exploitation, and injustice. But while these two themes would prove powerful in normality's self-representation, late-nineteenth-century discussions of civilized nervousness also differed from early-twentieth-century discussions of normality along several axes. Neurasthenia discourse's representations of whiteness foregrounded its physical weakness, while normality discourse emphatically rejected all suggestions of pathology; and neurasthenic whiteness was relatively explicit about its class and ethnic specificity and superiority, whereas normal whiteness defined itself in much more inclusive, and ever more power-evasive, terms.

In chapter 2 I argue that modern heterosexuality, which emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as an ideal of erotic discipline in marriage, was a central discursive site for the solidification of white power-evasiveness under the sign of the normal. In the marital advice literature that forms the core archive for this discussion, the sensitivity that late-nineteenth-century elites had argued was the hallmark of civilized whiteness was uncoupled from nervous illness. Instead, white sensitivity was newly framed as the capacity for shared erotic pleasure in egalitarian, loving marriages.

Concerns about white reproductive weakness did not simply disappear over the turn of the century. Rather, they were reframed by the consolidation of a relatively clear homosexual identity category. A rich body of historical scholarship has established that, both at the level of discourse and at the level of cultural experience, early-twentieth-century sexuality was increasingly organized in relation to the great homo / hetero divide.[22] In this era "homosexuality," and its more colloquial counterpart "queer," often connoted erotic weakness, degeneracy, and primitivism.[23] By the 1920s, fears about white reproductive weakness had realigned around the nightmare figure of the primitive pervert. Queer forms of sexual desire and gender expression acquired the capacity to represent sexual disability, which in the context of evolutionary discourses of civilization meant that failures of development and self-control were increasingly associated with same-sex object choice and

opposite-gender presentation. White self-control, in contrast, found mass expression in the optimistic discourses of modern normality. A new generation came of age between the wars. Its plaster avatars, Norma and Normman, are not representations of white delicacy; they are whiteness regnant. The statues capture a widespread early-twentieth-century claim that modern normality was the triumphant answer to fears about the reproductive weakness of white civilization.

In chapter 2 I examine the way in which popular marital advice literature from the 1920s and 1930s reconfigured the Gilded Age's fear that white civilization was threatened by its own evolved superiority. Marriage manuals responded to the perception that modernity was undermining family and nation by constructing a newly intense kind of conjugal lovemaking as the antidote to divisive forces inherent in the machine age. Such works argued that shared erotic pleasure was the foundation of white married life and, by extension, white civilization. By modifying their gestures and adjusting their timing to guarantee mutual satisfaction, "normal" couples cultivated and demonstrated their self-control and sensitivity to the common good. Thus a vast mass-marketed literature on modern marital sexuality represented intercourse as a miniature rehearsal of the social and political values at the core of democratic ideology. It was becoming possible to imagine erotically charged marriage as inseparable from American citizenship in a way that legitimized the exclusion of homosexuals and other sexual "deviants" from full membership in the polity.[24] At the same time, the manuals' representation of tender concern for others as "normal" helped to sustain the dream that racial conflict, male dominance, and economic inequity were incidental to, rather than systemic in, modern civilization in the United States.

Marital advice literature's construction of ideal sexuality echoes neurasthenia discourse's representation of civilized whiteness as involving a strict regime of self-discipline harnessing white sensitivity to the good of the society at large. The interwar ideal of modern sexuality, however, extended that self-disciplined sensitivity from well-bred, native-born Anglo-Americans to the larger group of white people in general. This was the reason that the manuals could afford to be so much more optimistic than their nineteenth-century predecessors: American civilization's legacy of "high" or "true" whiteness could be preserved by expanding access to its central values *via* mass education in erotic self-control.

While I interpret marriage manuals as evidence of the mass-cultural

implantation of bourgeois sexual self-discipline, it is nonetheless true that adults bought, read, and used such advice literature entirely at their own discretion. In contrast, hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of modern children, adolescents, and young adults were required to learn about the importance of sexual self-control in elementary and secondary schools and in the armed services. This is the subject of chapter 3, where I examine the way in which mass sex instruction for young people served to reinforce the correlation of heterosexual whiteness to normality. Early-twentieth-century sex education existed to convince students of the natural, apolitical connection between sexual self-restraint, an erotic ethic of monogamy in marriage, and the strength of white civilization. This was so despite the fact that sex-instructional materials very rarely discuss race or sexuality per se. Sex-instructional literature for children and adolescents communicated in an elaborately metaphorical and euphemistic language which emphasized that modesty and discretion were inseparable from civilized sexuality. Thus sex education was also an education in indirect expression. Desire and power, sexuality and white racial dominance were not matters for overt discussion, despite their ubiquity in "hygiene" and "family life" classrooms across the nation. A generation learned that decent people talked about these things obliquely. Being normal required learning to substitute the vague language of normal development for political analysis or cultural critique of existing sexual and racial relations.

Whereas in the late nineteenth century bourgeois whiteness represented itself as precious and besieged, by the Second World War white relational ideals were reconfigured as simply "normal," the apparently universal values shared by all right-thinking (or white-thinking) Americans. Sex education was one of the mass-cultural means by which this new, apparently race-neutral form of whiteness was transmitted to the first generation of Americans born and raised to be modern. In fact, this literature underscores the point that Norma and Normman have already illustrated: normality gathered much of its meaning from its indirect reference to modern whiteness as a set of universal values.

Though "normality" attained its greatest cultural power in the second half of the twentieth century, I conclude this study in the early 1940s for several reasons. First, it is significant that evolutionary / biological explanations of racial and sexual identity found their cultural and scientific authority challenged at this time. The nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century phe-

nomenon known as "scientific racism" described human groups as "discrete and biotic entities" with clearly demarcated physical traits that signaled heritable intellectual and moral qualities.[25] Much contemporary research on sexuality proceeded from exactly the same premises, with the sole exception that most scientific racists were certain that racial traits were ineradicable and many sexologists thought that sexuality might be more fungible than that. But throughout the period 1880 to 1940, a generally evolutionist, biologistic perspective dominated print discussions of both race and sexuality in the United States and helped to suture them together.

These biologistic, evolutionary interpretations of sexuality were in decline before American entry into World War II. Although "glandular" (hormonal) therapies for homosexuality continued in the 1950s, by the late 1930s the trend away from physical and toward psychogenic explanations for sexuality was clear.[26] When the Committee for the Study of Sex Variance (the first major research group on sexuality in the United States) convened in 1935, its goal was to test "all the major etiological theories of homosexuality," and a number of its members were selected precisely for their interest in child development and mental health. In the Committee's 1941 report, it announced its conclusion that "the more 'pronounced deficiencies' of the sex variant were psychological rather than physical."[27] The same year, Alfred Kinsey published a highly influential article criticizing endocrine research and stating unequivocally that all such biologistic sexual science was inherently flawed. In his stringent critique he singled out the belief "that homosexuality and heterosexuality are two mutually exclusive phenomena emanating from fundamentally and, in at least some cases, inherently different types of individuals."[28] These publications seem to mark the end of the era when most sex researchers thought in the language of scientific racism and so suggest 1941 as a neat ending date for a study that devotes considerable attention to popular scientific discourses.

Approaching periodization from the perspective of race gives almost the same end date for slightly different reasons. By the early 1940s, as the criminal racial policies of fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany became known in the United States, intellectuals across the disciplines began to scramble for a new and less biologistic conception of race. In addition, African American agitation against segregation in the military and discrimination in defense industries during World War II opened the Civil Rights era, a whole new phase of American racial politics that would shape racial discourse for the

next generation. Though the connections between race and sexuality remained profoundly significant during and after World War II, both the content and the context of those connections were different enough to warrant a separate study.[29] In short, I contend that it is not possible to develop an adequate understanding of race between the Gilded Age and World War II without attending to sexuality, and vice versa, but my cutoff date is not meant to suggest that after the war the two axes of identity suddenly stopped speaking to one another.

Sources and Methods, Boundaries and Centers

The diverse sources that ground this argument have several common threads. They are all, in their different ways, informative about the consolidation of marital heterosexuality as a distinct and privileged mode of experiencing erotic desire and pleasure; and all were chosen for their capacity to illustrate the way in which the rise of normality discourse helped to deauthorize explicit engagement with white racial meaning, and especially with white racial dominance. This particular archive demonstrates that one of the ways that whiteness became "race-evasive" was through the normalizing of deeply racialized sexual and relational ideals under the sign of "modern marriage." It also suggests that the collapse of normal whiteness into a marital ideal of erotic affection helped to expand the social category of whiteness across classes and, to a lesser extent, across ethnicities. Other archives, if investigated with a similar eye to the elision of white racial specificity in the early twentieth century, no doubt would illuminate different discursive strategies and effects: precisely because normality acquired a tremendously broad cultural reach, it can be investigated in many forms and from many perspectives.

For instance, one could choose to delineate normality's boundaries through close study of representations of perversion and the consolidation of homosexual definition in the early twentieth century, or through sources which record the ongoing importance of conflict over white racial definition and dominance. There is no shortage of source material for these interesting and valuable projects. Further, the scholarly consensus seems to be that comparative, dialectical, or deconstructive studies are to be preferred to more univocal ones, because their emphasis on the relational character of identity classifications makes it harder to evade their political implications. Such approaches have the additional appeal of testifying to their authors'

political consciousness, while less dialogical strategies risk appearing naïve at best, perniciously ideological at worst.

Nevertheless, I have chosen to concentrate not on boundaries and relationships across categories of sexuality and race but on the comparatively claustrophobic subject of normality's internal descriptions and definitions of itself. That is one reason that I have grounded my analysis in print sources from the poorly defined yet fairly consistent genre we might call "normal sexual science." Theoretical descriptions of modern nervousness, sex advice for married couples, and educational materials about reproductive physiology and venereal disease all speak about sex from and to the position of civilized modern whiteness that the later materials refer to as "normal."

These sources' semi-scientific status authorized their relatively explicit discussions of sexuality as the allegedly apolitical vector for the reproduction of white civilization. Nevertheless, their authority in a popular (rather than medical or sexological) context could never be taken for granted simply on the basis of their scientificity: the mass distribution of these sources, and their publishers' bottom line, depended on their ability to speak in terms that their broad readership could recognize as legitimate and objective. Popular scientific writing, like that in marital advice literature or the Cleveland *Plain Dealer,* had to meet both genre-specific and popular-cultural standards of "normality" before it could see print. Such texts therefore offer us rich evidence for the contents of that category not only on the explicitly topical level but also in their mode of presentation, their assumptions about readership, use of illustrations, strategies of argumentation, tone, and so forth. It is also relevant that popular-scientific sources on sex were widely available. In the early twentieth century, they were often distributed free of charge through institutions like schools, public health clinics, and the armed services. Such mass-cultural publications offer access to some of the most authoritative and least controversial forms of knowledge about sexuality and race available at the time of their writing and distribution. Whatever we know or don't know about the reach and influence of individual documents, we can be certain that the positions they advance were "normal" ones. These sources not only described normality, they performed it.

The textual performance of normality involved a strikingly narrow focus. These sources are utterly self-involved; their world is inhabited only by themselves and by people like them. Though there are differences of opinion or approach among my sources, and even the development of distinct

schools of thought about such things as the best strategies for teaching modern American children about sex, these differences pale when situated in relation to the overwhelming consensus that normal texts, and normal people, do not discuss the unequal distribution of social power or the conflicts to which it gives rise. Only very rarely do these normal sources go so far as to acknowledge the existence of people of color or of "perverse" forms of sexuality, and when they do appear, such acknowledgments are cursory. The absence of dialogic engagement with positions excluded from the category of the normal was so widespread that it appears to have been a constitutive element of normality, not an accidental one, a fact which makes these texts' refusal to engage in overtly political debate worth sustained consideration. Thus I work with "normal" texts despite some reservations about the ease with which the strategic reasons for that decision—which I will detail in a moment—can disappear behind its consistency with normative academic practice; unless they announce themselves as explicitly authored by and addressed to people of color and/or gay or queer people, most books about U.S. history can safely be assumed to be by and about heterosexual whites at the level of evidence as well as at the level of argumentation. Yet while I recognize the risk of appearing to participate in the marginalization and epistemological disqualification of non-normative subjects, there are several reasons—political, historical, and conceptual—that I believe it is valuable to concentrate on "normal" articulations of normality's meaning.

The first reason is a straightforward political urge to make whiteness speak its own name. Because white muteness about its raciality seems clearly connected to white irresponsibility in regard to its power, it is appropriate to push at that muteness in the process of its implantation, to explore the evidence it offers about how whiteness's self-definition as "normal" facilitated white ignorance and innocence in relation to ongoing racial inequality. There is a similar political satisfaction in mining heterosexuality's self-congratulatory descriptions of its naturalness and innocence for evidence of its historical embeddedness in unequal relations of power.

The second reason is historical. Grace Elizabeth Hale has suggested that whites became less articulate about race between 1890 and 1940 because their racial position became more secure. Whereas Emancipation, immigration, and industrialization had shaken the late-nineteenth-century sociopolitical order to its foundations, and so stimulated whites to define and defend

their privileged place in the nation, Hale argues that by 1930 the white-dominant culture of segregation was so deeply entrenched that whites no longer needed to fear losing control over "their" civilization. One result was the increasing "blankness" of whiteness as a racial position.[30] My sources suggest that the contemporary name for what Hale sees as blankness was "normality." Sources that document normality's self-understanding at the moment of its emergence make it plain that the category was anything but empty or neutral, and so ask us to engage the appearance of "blankness" in new terms. Working with sources that are themselves apparently blank on the subject of race, and yet that turn out to be full of representations of whiteness, shifts the terms of current scholarly discussion about the history of white raciality in what I hope will be a productive way.

I will return to the secondary literature on the history and meaning of whiteness and its apparent emptiness in the next section. Here I want to suggest that segregation did not actually render whiteness blank. Instead, it provided the larger context in which whites' racial place in the nation could be displaced into discussions of marital sexuality: the (re)institutionalization of white power in the early twentieth century allowed, maybe required, a discursive shift away from the question of whether whiteness would continue to dominate, to the question of how white-dominant civilization could best be perpetuated. The popular-scientific sources on which this book is based answered that question by developing a definition of "normal" heterosexuality that emphasized marital romance as the mode of white civilization's reproduction. The internal focus of such sources, the complete erasure of sexually or racially non-normative voices that might have challenged their collapse of white raciality into the eroticization of married love, is inseparable from their claim to normality.

Collapsing white civilization into marriage required the conceptual, as well as legal, refusal to allow the legitimacy of love across the color line, and also of same-sex relationships. Peggy Pascoe has argued that miscegenation law was much less about sex per se than about who could marry whom; in her persuasive account, legitimate reproduction of the nation was the core political issue in courts' attempts to determine the racial boundaries of wedlock.[31] It is therefore not surprising that my "normal" scientific sources, reflecting as they do a depoliticized version of the segregated sociosexual order, silently assume both that sex takes place between married people and that married people are always and necessarily of the same race. Here again

it is clear that normal sources distort the world in both sexual and racial terms. Early-twentieth-century Americans took their pleasure, fell in love, and sometimes married within categories of sex as across categories of race. Court cases, white-supremacist polemics, eugenics displays at state fairs, novels, and many other sources testify to the breadth and depth of contemporary white anxieties about the "contamination" of whiteness through interracial liaisons, and so scholars working with such sources generally focus on the tremendous significance early-twentieth-century whites attached to the policing of racial / sexual boundaries.[32] Yet the territory of white-on-white marital heterosexuality that those boundaries defended is virtually never discussed in racial terms.

This neglect needs redress because sexual desire and activity between men and women constructed not only racial edges but racial centers; both biologically and culturally, potentially reproductive sex lent itself to the consolidation of racial identity as well as to its transgression. At the same time, normal sources' insistence that "sex" is potentially reproductive in its essence worked to define whiteness in terms that mandated and naturalized heterosexuality. Many such sources suggest that the reproduction of white civilization in the twentieth century required husbands' and wives' mutual investment of sexual difference with erotic desire. The problematization and eroticization of married love in normal sources from the early twentieth century may reflect the instability of gender relations relative to race relations in this segregationist era, so that male dominance seemed less secure than white dominance by the end of the 1930s. It is more certain that the collapse of whiteness into love could not have appeared plausible outside the narrow bounds of a securely all-white context in which explicit discussions of contested race relations were already otiose. In short, the linked discursive processes of white deracialization and the invention of heterosexuality are vividly on display in "normal" mass-cultural sources that are less explicitly interested in "the race problem" than they are in affirming the natural rightness and sexiness of monogamous marriage between civilized whites. Concentrating on these "normal" sources therefore can facilitate critical focus on the self-justificatory logic of normality's political evasiveness.

This leads to my conceptual reason for choosing to focus on normality in conversation with itself, which is that norms appear to be inherently solipsistic. Francois Ewald proposes that a norm is "a way for a group to provide itself with a common denominator in accordance with a rigorous principle

of self-referentiality, with no recourse to any kind of external reference point, either in the form of an idea or an object. . . . [A] norm, by virtue of which everyone can measure, evaluate and identify himself or herself, will be derived from those for whom it will serve as a standard."[33] In the purely statistical sense normality is a distributive relation within a data-set, such that phenomena or people defined as outside that set cannot meaningfully be described in relation to its norm. In a social rather than mathematical sense, of course, the early-twentieth-century definition of the normal by reference to a bounded racial and sexual group was tremendously consequential for people who could not plausibly claim membership in that group. Being excluded from the universe of people who count meant (and means) occupying a position that was always-already constructed by reference to what it was not: not white, not a native speaker of English, not married, not male, not able-bodied, "not quite our class."

This position is often much more socially alert than is a "normal" one. As such, it may generate both social movements for inclusion and critical analyses of systemic injustice. Non-normativity can be a position of considerable critical insight, because people whose lives are shaped by their difference from the normal perforce must know a great deal about both their own positions and the ones that oppress them. In contrast, being one of the normal people means being defined by reference to what you already are and so slides easily into the (empirically inaccurate) conviction that one's own position is simply natural and devoid of political meaning. Normality therefore implies a limited and ideologically corrupt perspective.

The difference between these perspectives is reflected in the different valences of the terms currently available to talk about these matters: "normality" (or "normalcy") can be, and usually is, used unreflectively, while "normativity" and "heteronormativity" record a critical stance in relation to normality's regulatory force. At the risk of seeming to ventriloquize the short-sighted arrogance of the normal, in this book I generally use the language of the normal. "Normality" is the term used by people who aspire to it, then as now, and so it seems appropriate to a study that focuses so closely on the claustrophobic worldview of the normal.

The critical difference between normal (solipsistic) and non-heteronormative (at least potentially critical) perspectives has a great deal to do with current scholarly preferences for analyzing both race and sexuality in terms of borders, intersections, mutual constitution, and dialogues. Whether they

employ dialectical or deconstructive strategies, such relational emphases offer a necessary corrective to the infuriating blandness with which normative positions assume not only their universality and innocence but their ontological purity and epistemological superiority as well: there is a certain sense of triumph in demonstrating that whiteness depends on establishing the inferiority of blackness, heterosexuality on the abjection of homosexuality, for their basic meaning as well as for their power. Nonetheless, to treat white racial or heterosexual positions as though they acquire meaning *only* through their representations of and relationships to the categories of people they exclude is to forget the separatism and self-involvement inherent in the concept of the normal. If segregation provided the social and political context in which normality discourse developed, the self-referentiality of the norm provided the conceptual context in which whiteness and heterosexuality could focus myopically on their own small worlds, ignoring the existence of other positions while perceiving themselves as politically innocent, natural qualities of individuals.

On "Normality Studies"

Normality discourse, then, can be characterized as closing down the conceptual space for overly political discussions of racial and erotic hierarchies in the early-twentieth-century United States. Yet for all their refusal to consider the validity of different interpretative positions on white racial meaning or the natural superiority of heterosexuality, many "normal" sources from this period are highly articulate about one axis of difference: that of historical change. We have already seen that Norma and Normman were instantiations of the developmental progress of American civilization from generation to generation. Though their normality was profoundly self-referential in the sense that it referred only to the characteristics of potentially reproductive "native white Americans" and the culture they claimed as their own, it also acquired significance through its claim to superiority over earlier generations of civilized whites. Moderns were fond of representing their own historical moment as distinctly better than the recent past, especially in terms of the organization and expression of sexuality.

Yet while the emergence of a uniquely modern sexuality at this time is widely recognized, remarkably few historians have investigated sexual modernism as such. Most of those who do so have tended to accept their subjects' sense of difference from and superiority over the recent past as a

reflection of historical fact.[34] In an influential early study of the subject, Paul Robinson defined sexual modernism as "a reaction against Victorianism," explaining that the earliest articulators of modernist sexual theory—men like Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud—were "quite self-conscious about their departure from . . . nineteenth-century sexual orthodoxy."[35] Christina Simmons, in contrast, has made a powerful case against taking the modernist claim of sexual radicalism at face value. She, and a number of feminist scholars following her lead, have argued that this claim was a ruse of patriarchal power, a way of turning attention away from the continuing political, economic, and psychological subordination of women by emphasizing the "liberation" of heterosexual expression.[36]

Though I find many aspects of this revisionist argument persuasive, the present work offers a different, and more race-sensitive, interpretation of the early-twentieth-century transformation of sexual relationships between men and women into modern normative heterosexuality. Just as Norma and Normman appeared more strikingly modern when posed next to their "grandparents," Ellis and Freud and many others secured their status as "moderns" by drawing attention to their difference from the "Victorians." Yet by emphasizing their difference from the past as the ground of their identity, they also revealed their continuing conceptual dependence on the past as the benchmark against which they measured their own progress.

Like the classical Athenian marbles that emphasized both Norma and Normman's modern sleekness and their ancient lineage of whiteness, moderns most often pointed to the past both to separate themselves from it and to claim progressive descent from it. If we recall Alexander Saxton's dictum that race is a theory of history, this double relationship to the past suggests a racial dimension to sexual modernism that has not yet figured in scholarly discussion.[37] The white moderns whose writing informs the present work were in a unique *racial* position in relation to sexuality: because they believed themselves to be the legitimate heirs to western civilization in America, they felt entitled to modify their legacy as they saw fit. Their sense of racially based ownership of the civilization they inherited from the Victorians authorized their interventions in the construction of new standards of sexual sensitivity and restraint, health and happiness—that is, of sexual norms. When moderns indicted the Victorians for their sexual pathologies, they were making an argument as much as an observation: they wanted to claim "normality" for themselves and their own generation's orthodoxies.[38]

With Foucault, I believe that to claim the status of normality is also to lay "claim to power. The norm is not simply . . . a principle of intelligibility; it is an element on the basis of which a certain exercise of power is founded and legitimized."[39] It follows that any self-description as "normal" should be treated with a certain skepticism, not to say wariness, about the political relations condensed and concealed in that gesture. For this reason, my approach to the literature of modern sexual normality is influenced by bodies of scholarship that have used such skepticism as a foundational interpretive tool: gay and lesbian history; queer theory; and antiracist feminist criticism. Though all these fields, like other branches of academic inquiry, have tended to be dominated by white scholars, they owe significant (if not always recognized) analytic debts to African American political and cultural criticism. Anti-lynching, Civil Rights, and Black Power activists played extremely important roles in developing the diagnostics of systemic social injustice that were taken up in the whiter contexts of the New Left and of the women's and gay liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s.[40] It is therefore not surprising that antiracist feminism and gay and lesbian historical studies have long shared a characteristic skepticism about the naturalness, innocence, and universality of the category of the "normal."

At least since the mid-1970s, feminist scholars have been writing about the inseparability of race from the lived experience and politics of gender.[41] This literature is so well developed that I have felt free to put gender on the back burner in the current work; it makes periodic appearances where it is important in each chapter but does not constitute the principle analytic focus of my argument. It is nonetheless worth noting that my arguments resonate with those generated by feminist scholars exploring the problematics of representing desire in the context of racism and sexism. Ann DuCille, for instance, describes "the coupling convention" in U.S. black women's fiction as a political metaphor, "the outward and visible sign of the inward and systemic ills that plague American society."[42] DuCille insists we recognize such representations of marriage and family relations as serious approaches to a politically fraught domain laden with racial claims and patriarchal expectations. Deborah McDowell, Darlene Clark Hine, and others have also underscored the inextricability of racial, gendered, and erotic representations and social positionings in the early-twentieth-century United States.[43]

I have refracted such race-sensitive feminist historical interests through a queer lens. Though large swaths of contemporary queer life elide the radical

antiracist tradition that informed the liberation movements of the late 1960s, some significant conceptual similarities remain. In many gay, lesbian, fetish, S/M, and other non-normative sexual communities, the meaning of any given form of erotic expression has been so actively contested that even pro-homosexual claims (e.g., "I was born gay") have long been recognizable not as universal truths but as positions in an ongoing cultural argument about sexuality. Queer theory is a form of engagement with this larger argument. One of its core commitments is the critical exploration of "the limitations, exclusions, and biases inherent within the process of delimiting sexual normality."[44] Queer-theoretical interests and attitudes therefore share with feminist and antiracist projects—with which they sometimes overlap—the political mark of their common emergence from liberation movements: all are motivated by the desire to expose and protest the fact that inequality and injustice are "normal" in American social, cultural, and economic life.[45]

Over the last decade theoretically informed queer sensitivity to the constructed and political nature of normality has helped to (re)direct scholarly attention both to heterosexuality and to the strong discursive connections between race and sex.[46] Yet despite their common origin in a politically alert skepticism about "normality" and its skewed perspective on the world, most often these topics have diverged such that in sexuality studies "race and sexuality" usually means "people of color and homosexuals."[47] Similarly, most critical work on whiteness has overlooked the significance of sexuality in the construction of white racial meaning and subjectivity.[48] To date, heterosexuality and whiteness have not been brought together into something one might think of as "normality studies." The present work is an attempt to forge a connection between the critical study of sexuality and the critical study of race such that "normality" becomes a subject for critical analysis *simultaneously* along both racial and sexual axes of difference and power.

Why hasn't this been done? Perhaps the most basic reason is a general sense that, however one approaches it, the subject of "normality" is a slippery one. Normality seems both immense and blank, ubiquitous and insubstantial, so that it is difficult to get a critical purchase on it except by catching at its ragged edges. In the effort to focus on its center, I have found it helpful to think of normality's apparent blankness as deriving from the power-evasiveness of its component parts, heterosexuality and whiteness. There is abundant evidence that whiteness is difficult for many whites to identify as a racial position at all, much less as a position one might study or work to

change.[49] Heterosexuality also has trouble recognizing its positional particularity, preferring to imagine, in Michael Warner's words, "that humanity and heterosexuality are synonymous."[50] If normality is a slippery subject, then, it is because whiteness and heterosexuality share a certain unwillingness to acknowledge their own power and the many forms of coercion and violence that uphold their unearned advantages; both prefer to perceive themselves as natural traits, simultaneously noble and innocent of political meanings. The ideological character of this perception does not make it any easier to explode. It does, however, highlight the relevance of a scholarly practice demonstrating that that shared inarticulate conviction of praiseworthy innocence is not random or coincidental but records the extent to which early-twentieth-century "power-evasive" justifications of both white and heterosexual dominance were constructed and conveyed through the discourses of the normal that linked them together.

The complexity of the relationship between power and cultural visibility is also relevant to the difficulty of conjoining whiteness and heterosexuality as the double subject of "normality studies." On the one hand, the ostentatious appearance of blankness is often a trace effect of covert power operations at work.[51] In our own day's political and representational orders, many forms of power protect, fortify, and perform themselves by reflecting a smooth and empty glossiness to the inquiring gaze. Vulnerability to others' power, in turn, is often experienced and represented in terms of the inability to refuse being investigated and evaluated. Hence, much work in critical whiteness studies seeks to render whiteness more visible in order to render it less dominating and more accountable.[52]

But on the other hand, there are social positions in which even a glimmer of cultural visibility is something to strive for, situations of erasure in which the simple fact of representation can suggest a shift or opening in relations of power, and the possibility of an increased access to agency. Most queer engagements with issues of visibility register heterosexual culture's history of erasing gay and lesbian people's social worlds and critical perspectives, often through the very acts of investigation that claim to bring them into view.[53] As a result, a primary goal of gay, lesbian, and queer scholarship has been to carve out a space in which queer representations and interpretations have epistemological and political value, with a focus on making oppositional discourses register as disruptions in the relentless display of normative heterosexuality that goes by the name "American culture." The kind of

"invisibility" that most concerns queer scholarship, in short, is of a different order than that which is of central interest in critical whiteness studies: it is the abject invisibility of having been eradicated from the representational field, not the powerful invisibility of the wizard pulling levers behind the curtain. Heterosexuality, from a queer perspective, is tiresomely overvisible already. Whiteness studies and gay / lesbian / queer theory thus engage issues of visibility and invisibility from different directions and with different needs. These differences doubtless have helped to obscure a crucial commonality between their analyses: across the disciplines (as in popular culture) it is widely believed that the tensions, struggles, and humiliations associated with membership in the "marked" and allegedly inferior subsets of sexual orientation and race (as well as of class, nationality, ability, and gender) dissolve under "normality's" magic sign.

Those who are excluded from the charmed circle are of necessity powerfully aware of its existence and the hierarchy of value it instates and enforces, and one result is that the invisibility or "blankness" of normality is much less credible to those who, for whatever reason, don't qualify for inclusion in that category.[54] Heterosexuality appears, from an explicitly antihomophobic perspective, much less natural than it does from one that presumes or accepts its dominance. Hence gay and lesbian history has given rise to interest in the history of heterosexuality, and queer-theoretical interpretation to this work's exploration of the concept of the normal. A similar trajectory has shaped the emergence of critical whiteness studies out of racially alert scholarship that originally sprang from and focused on the experience of people of color. I have already observed that much current work in the burgeoning field of whiteness studies notes the political significance of the white ability to avoid perceiving whiteness as a racial position. It is much less common for scholars to ask *how* whiteness became "invisible," or to connect that transparency to whiteness's historically specific cultural contents and meanings.[55]

This oversight stems in part from an influential argument that the reason whiteness does not appear to be a racial position is that it is an empty category. David Roediger, in what has become one of the foundational works of "whiteness studies," argues that whiteness is hard to see because it "is nothing but oppressive and false. . . . It is the empty and terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back."[56] More recently, Manning Marable has argued that though racial formations change in concert with changes in the mode of production,

"from the beginning whiteness was vacuous and sterile as a cultural entity."[57] In such analyses, whiteness appears to be "normal" because it is powerful enough to "hold back," that is, silence or marginalize, the voices of those who might testify to its specificity and its violence. In and for itself, it has nothing to say.

This view holds that whiteness has no cultural contents or meaning besides domination. Yet while white people have dominated the United States since its colonial beginnings, neither "normality" nor "whiteness" has always appeared to be empty. An identificatory label that refuses identificatory specificity bears all the marks of ideology at work, and as such it ought to draw our most sensitive critical scrutiny. When antiracist scholars assert that whiteness has no contents, they duplicate its claim that it is simply normal; their intervention is only at the level of evaluating normal whiteness as dangerous and violent. The attribution of "normality" is, in general, equivalent to an assertion that "there is nothing here to see or name." It is therefore skating close to complicity in a system that sustains its inequities by denying their existence. Thus, though most whiteness studies are motivated by a desire to reveal the political contents and consequences of whiteness, I am concerned that assertions of its emptiness may actually work to renaturalize the category in ways that produce political stasis rather than transformation.[58]

After all, the fact that "whiteness" claims to be "normal," that is, neutral and natural and universal, does not make it so. Norma and Normman embody ample evidence that, if heterosexual whiteness is "unmarked" at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has not always been that way. In the early twentieth century, the racial and sexual beliefs, desires, practices, fears, hopes, fantasies, dreams, anatomies, regrets, rituals, compromises, physiologies, and failures of "normal," middle-class, white Americans were matters of intense interest to scholars and reformers of every stripe, as well as to millions of modern laypeople who produced and consumed popular representations of sex and romance. The sources on which this study is based establish beyond a doubt that many late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century whites were strongly aware of the racial specificity of the values they associated with "their" civilization, just as they discussed what a "normal" sexual expression and reproduction of those values entailed. Historical study can help us reconstruct the central cultural contents of whiteness during the years—only eight or nine decades, one long life ago—when the ascent of

"normality" rendered those contents difficult for many whites to see and name directly.

Where Whiteness and Sexuality Intersect: Discursive History and Racial Ideals

Some readers will not recognize this work as historical in approach: not only do I rely on close reading of published texts, rather than the presentation of archival evidence, as my basic argumentative strategy, I am more interested in discourses than data, representations than facts. My sources offer little direct evidence of the way any real flesh-and-blood human being occupied the entwined categories "normal," "heterosexual," and "white," nor do I engage in extended analysis of their material consequences.[59] This is a deliberate choice and reflects my sense that more conventional historical methods, though fruitful for investigations of other kinds of historical phenomena, often find themselves unable to say much more about discursive constructions than that they are ideological.[60] In contrast, an interdisciplinary interpretative approach to the discursively available categories of selfhood can tell us a great deal about the lived experience of the past that more social-scientific methods and "harder" kinds of evidence cannot.

Identity categories are representational modes, and as such they can have the same kind of large-scale evidentiary historical significance as an era's architecture, fiction, or advertising. At the same time they are intimate and personal: they describe the temporally specific boundaries on the vocabularies with which people can ask and answer the questions "who am I," "who are we," and "who are you?" Identity categories are the words with which post-Enlightenment Westerners try to explain our differences from one another and our moments of recognition, our identifications with ourselves, and the ways these fail us. And fail they do. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has noted, "it is astonishing how few respectable conceptual tools we have for dealing with this self-evident fact [that humans differ from one another]. A tiny number of inconceivably coarse axes of categorization have been painstakingly inscribed in current critical and political thought: gender, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation are pretty much the available distinctions."[61] Historians might add "era" and "religion," and disability studies scholars and activists are working hard to get "ability" included, but more additions to the list would not add up to a good description of the experience of the sense of self-in-the-world. Yet the inadequacy and clumsiness of tax-

onomies does not render them optional or unimportant. Neither does their ideological character mean that discursive analysis of them inevitably evacuates the political, as social historians have often contended.[62] On the contrary, identity categories have immense political as well as personal significance; our situation in relation to discourses of the self is and has long been an important part of how Westerners recognize ourselves and one another as humans and as particular kinds of humans, available for some relationships, jobs, and dwellings and not for others.[63] Precisely to the extent that "normality" functioned in early-twentieth-century culture as a euphemistic substitute for more explicitly politicized identities referring to sexuality and race, it demands that we attend to the discursive moves through which it acquired the appearance of blank emptiness and innocence.

This study, then, rests on the premise that the identity categories of sexuality and race—like those of gender, class, nationality, religion, and some forms of "disability"—are condensations of historical processes saturated with relations of power. Through these processes, individuals are positioned and position themselves as white or colored, normal or perverse, men or women, modern or old-fashioned, healthy or ill, respectable or marginal, and so forth.[64] This means that I do not see identity categories like "normality," "heterosexuality," or "whiteness" as descriptions of people's essential natures, consistent across time, nor as collections of more or less concrete traits that all "normal," "straight," or "white" people can be presumed to share within a given time. Rather, they are and were ideals to which no real person can ever quite conform, though the members of some social categories gain real social privileges by their perceived proximity to those ideals.[65] The following chapters tell the story of how "normality" came to serve as a sort of discursive umbrella under which white, heterosexual Americans in a formally democratic society could claim both physical and cultural ownership of modern civilization. I argue that normality discourse helped root that claim in the sphere of sexual conduct and values, at a highly disciplined point of intersection between body and soul, self and civilization.

One of the chief consequences of the ascent of normality in the interwar years was that white Americans acquired a language of neutral self-description that identified them with all the best ideals and achievements of civilization. That identification was sometimes used to bolster explicitly racist arguments about the inferiority of nonwhite Americans, but the evolutionary superiority of modern whiteness was implicit in the construction of nor-

mality even in the absence of overt racial comparisons. Norma and Normman are good examples of normality discourse's ability to celebrate whiteness without mentioning the existence of the "inferior" races. Indeed, normality helped to construct modern whiteness as inherently superior to other races, and simultaneously as innocent of involvement in other peoples' political, cultural, and economic disempowerment. The fact that this discourse developed during the same years that the second Ku Klux Klan formed and flourished underscores the fact that "normality" was a cultural ideal, rather than a description of social reality.[66]

For this reason, I tend to read my sources not so much for evidence of what really happened, in terms of who exercised what forms of power in relation to whom, but rather for evidence of how a dominant racial class represented the legitimacy of its power. Such a reading strategy seems especially appropriate because many of the sources I explore were attempting to guide their readers' behavior into the normative channels the texts constructed and reflected. Prescriptive sources are in many ways dubious historical documents, offering only very problematic information about what people actually did.[67] This is largely because they had ideological and commercial agendas to fulfill but also because readers then, as now, were active and selective in their approach to texts; for instance, while we can establish that a specific marriage manual sold briskly for several decades, we cannot then deduce that people bought it for the same reasons and read it with the same reactions across that span of time. The disjuncture between normative sexual and racial discourse and its reception, or enactment in actual experiences, should not be forgotten. Nevertheless, this project proceeds from the premise that what people said in public, in forms that reached hundreds of thousands of readers, has its own kind of truth: it tells us a great deal about the "official" (read: normal, and therefore white and heterosexual) wisdom of the day, and in turn about the cultural values and beliefs in relation to which individual identities and political positions were formed. Dominant discursive constructions may tell us very little about the practices of everyday life, but they tell us a great deal about the systems of belief and power with which people had to live and contend. Without a rich understanding of the way in which "normality" was articulated in the modern age, we lack the proper interpretative context for understanding how real people lived their lives, under what psychic and cultural constraints they labored, and why they made the choices they did.

Perhaps this is the place to discuss the important question of exactly

which whiteness I mean. One of the most fruitful insights of whiteness studies has been its recognition that not all whites are white in the same way. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whiteness was fractured into many races—for instance, Celtic, Teutonic, and Mediterranean people were all "white," but their positions in relation to that larger racial category were not identical.[68] The historian Matthew Frye Jacobson has made an especially persuasive case against the notion of a "monolithic" whiteness in precisely the period about which I write here.[69] From the 1840s to the 1920s, Jacobson shows, massive immigration raised questions about whether legal whiteness (which had rendered immigrants eligible for naturalization since 1790) was an adequate qualification for full citizenship. The combination of a "universal" white naturalization law with a steady influx of immigrants meant that Americans of this era developed an extraordinarily nuanced perception of the physical and moral traits of different whitenesses. For all the nuance of this perception, however, the social distribution of power and privilege was often pretty simple: only Anglo-Saxons shared the racial heritage of republican self-government, and so all others were "probationary whites." As Jacobson puts it, an Irish or Italian immigrant's "racial credentials" as white were simply not "equivalent to those of the Anglo-Saxon 'old stock' who laid proprietary claim to the nation's . . . stewardship."[70] Only in the decades after the 1924 Johnson Act sharply curtailed immigration, Jacobson argues, did the relatively inclusive panethnic category "Caucasian" succeed the multiple, hierarchically arranged whitenesses of the previous eighty years.

When I speak of the construction and consolidation of "normal" whiteness across the era between 1890 and 1940, I do not mean to invoke a racial monolith where none existed. I do, however, mean to point to the widespread belief throughout this period that there was a sort of core racial essence that defined authentic American whiteness. In the 1880s, when my study opens, the "Anglo-Saxon 'old stock' who laid proprietary claims to the nation's . . . stewardship" were anxious about the threat to their dominance posed by the influx of white immigrants as well as by the post-Emancipation political realignment of the nation, and they expressed that anxiety by describing their own class-specific cultural ideals as the character or essence of "civilized" whiteness. In the 1920s and 1930s, when "normality" was coming to define a mass-cultural sexual standard at least theoretically accessible to all whites, that ideal racial essence retained significant elements of its older

composition. In other words, who counted as "white" changed more, and more quickly, than the contents of the ideal of "whiteness" itself. Though the people Jacobson calls "old stock," "Anglo-Saxon," and "patrician" whites certainly had and retained a privileged relationship to ideal whiteness, that whiteness was not only a genealogical property of persons. It was also a series of interconnected beliefs about the virtues of self-cultivation and self-control in relation to the family, the nation, and civilization. Together these beliefs constituted a racial and sexual ideal of the "normal American." This ideal, rather than the various specific whitenesses of European immigrants, is the subject of this study.

Once again, Norma and Normman can make the point clearer. The statues derived their representational authority from their claim to truthful, accurate, transparent duplication of the statistically average measurements of American citizens in general. At the same time, it was a matter of public record that the statues reflected the measurements of "the old American stock," and that there were a disproportionate number among them of elite students from the Ivy League and the Seven Sisters.[71] "Normality" was, even at midcentury, a description of the scions of old Yankee families. Therefore we can say that "normality" did not need to justify itself by reference to any statistically normal population but co-existed quite comfortably with the acknowledgment that the "normal" was socially superior.[72]

In any case, it was manifest that the statues were much better-looking than the "average." Harry Shapiro of the Museum of Natural History wrote, "One might well look at a multitude of young men and women before finding an approximation to these normal standards. We have to do here then with apparent paradoxes. Let us state it this way: . . . the average is excessively rare."[73] Public acknowledgment that "normality" was a racial and sexual ideal derived from a patrician population did not make "normality" seem less normal, or even less democratic. When the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* conducted a "Search for Norma," inviting the women of Ohio to submit their measurements in competition for a substantial prize, it did so as a test to find out "if such a figure exists in life as well as in statistics."[74] Almost four hundred entries a day came pouring in, but 3,864 entries later, the paper concluded that "Norma remained a hypothetical individual."[75] The young woman who won the prize was no patrician; Martha Skidmore worked as a ticket-seller in a local movie theater and had been a gauge grinder during the war. But she won because her measurements approximated Norma's better

than any others, and that approximation was enough for the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*. The "normal," in short, was an ideal. Apparently, "what is" was not, and everybody knew it.

This paradoxical, contradictory quality of whiteness registers its slippage back and forth from a material description or ascription of real Americans to an ideal, almost Platonic form to which no real person could conform. It is in this latter sense that I suggest that normal "whiteness" had relatively consistent meanings even though, at the same time, the racial category was both deeply fractured by ethnicity and applied in wildly unpredictable ways by naturalization and other courts.[76] The central contents of the category were much less flexible than the legal and social groupings of the persons who found themselves measured against it.

What were these central contents? I concur with Jacobson's suggestion that self-governance was the core value at the heart of whiteness. However, his scholarly interest in public-sphere politics and society leads him to neglect two crucial and connected issues: the specifically erotic, affective, and familial dimensions of self-governance, and the remarkable durability, against all evidence to the contrary, of the belief that whiteness is fundamentally "disciplined, virtuous, self-sacrificing, productive, far-seeing, and wise."[77] Jacobson, indeed, emphasizes that these white virtues were the qualities of an ideal citizen in a democracy, and he even notes that republican government requires its citizens to learn to control their passions. But where Jacobson moves on to note simply that "probationary whites" like the Irish or the Italians were widely depicted as problematic citizens inherently unable to curb their political passions in the interest of the common good, I emphasize "self-governance" in its sexual and emotional sense. The passions that could destroy the republican experiment were the passions of the bedroom as well as of the marketplace and the ballot box.

If "the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Teutonic race of the Caucasian group" failed to reproduce itself, no purely formal training in civics could replace the white "racial genius" for freedom tempered with responsibility.[78] If white husbands and wives could not work out marital relationships that modeled in microcosm the tolerant but passionate give-and-take of democratic citizenship, the nation lost its chief referent and school for social order. If white children could not be taught to take up their privileged racial burden of self-control, the foundations of American civilization trembled. Thus I focus my analysis on the way in which controlled *erotic* passion helped to define a

bourgeois ideal of "true" American whiteness as the essence of civic and personal virtue.[79] This book, then, seeks to restore sexual desire and the problem of its management to its legitimate place in the construction of whiteness as ownership of the modern nation during the crucial era when mass culture was taking shape.[80]

I have already suggested that Harry Shapiro's use of Athenian marbles to represent the racial origins of modern normality contained an important, if inarticulate, reference to democratic political forms as a core component of the white civilization transmitted from generation to generation through sexual reproduction in marriage. I would like to conclude this introductory discussion with a brief discussion of two final sources. One is a semi-psychoanalytic work of cultural criticism and the other is a romantic Hollywood film directed at a broad popular audience; the first is self-consciously avant-garde, which is to say that it is proud of not being normal, while the second suggests that normality is the only route to happiness. Yet despite the difference in their genres, agendas, and expected audiences, they both represent heterosexual normality in terms of an implicitly racialized capacity for self-government. They can therefore illustrate something of the breadth of the representational frame in which race-evasive depictions of marital love worked to construct and communicate the power-evasive meanings of normal, modern whiteness.

In 1930 the leftist novelist and critic Floyd Dell argued that the material constraints on earlier civilizations had hampered both their sexual and political development: only with the coming of the machine age, he held, were people free enough to achieve adult heterosexuality.[81] At this time the term "heterosexuality" was just entering common use, so Dell felt it necessary to define the term for his readers. His definition conflates heterosexuality with modern marriage, which he describes in terms of the achieved capacity for independence and self-determination. The word "heterosexuality," he explained, derives "from the Greek 'heteros,' other, or different, or opposite—but having the sense also of being a 'mate' in that difference, as the one sex is to the other."[82] Desire for a member of the opposite sex, in Dell's eyes, was not genuine "heterosexuality" but only a biological response to sexual difference. As such, it involved a physical element common to all mammals. To qualify as adult heterosexuality, desire had to develop "through courtship

and love-choice" to "sexual mating, parenthood, and family life."[83] Earlier eras of white civilization had lacked the economic stability to permit people to pursue this modern marital ideal; Dell explained that relatively primitive forms of white civilization "required an infantilized form of heterosexual love—one sufficiently docile to parental authority" in order to survive. As a result, romantic love and desire had been excluded from marriage, and people had turned to the perverse eroticism of "homosexuality, prostitution-patronage, and polite adultery" in the effort to compensate for the limits "patriarchal tyranny" placed on sexual development. In contrast, Dell argued, *"modern machinery has laid the basis for a more biologically normal family life than has existed throughout the whole of the historical period, or indeed in the whole life of mankind."*[84]

For Dell, sexual development from "infantile" perversity (ancient Greek homosexuality, extramarital courtly love) to normal adult heterosexuality (modern marriage) was unmistakable evidence that modern industrial civilization was better than any other had ever been. Dell's argument turned on the conflation of the modern and the adult with the normal, a conflation that underscores the racial assumptions structuring his paean to heterosexuality. The claim that truly modern lovers were the first to achieve true adulthood resonates with the era's racist and imperialist constructions of nonwhite people as permanent children, incapable of self-rule and therefore requiring guidance from more advanced races. Dell's insistence that adult heterosexuality was a uniquely modern accomplishment worked to align perversion with primitivism even in the absence of references to the existence of people of color.

Further, it worked to align primitive perversion with political and personal constraint and modern heterosexuality with freedom. Dell's persistent figuration of the past as sexually and emotionally stifled by "patriarchal authority" implies that what he called "patriarchal countries" in the present had failed to evolve to the level of self-determination he saw as the great accomplishment of the modern United States. When people from those countries immigrated to the United States, they sometimes attempted to restrict heterosexual expression into forms native to their comparatively archaic cultures of origin; thus, Dell explained, white immigrant groups sometimes failed to foster sexual self-government in their children.[85] If they were to become "normal" Americans, immigrants had to adopt the modern American vision of marriage as a free partnership between consenting adults

motivated by mutual love and desire. And to the extent that they "grew up" enough to pursue the uniquely free heterosexual partnership of modern marriage, immigrant Europeans could hope to shed their "probationary" status and gain access to normality. At the same time, Dell's definition of heterosexuality implied that even an impeccably WASP heritage was not quite enough to guarantee that one's whiteness was fully normal. Normality required a specifically modern, indicatively white combination of erotic and emotional sensitivity and self-government.

One final source confirms that Dell's understanding of normal sexuality as instantiating an ideal of uniquely modern whiteness had representational counterparts in mass culture. MGM's hit 1928 film *Our Dancing Daughters* follows three young white women in their attempts to find happiness in marriage.[86] The plot follows a young flapper (Joan Crawford, in the role that made her a star) as she falls in love for the first time. Her frankness and energy make her devastatingly attractive, but the man she hopes to marry is beguiled by another young woman (Anita Page) into believing that Crawford is too "wild" to make a virtuous wife.

Crawford's beau is set up as easily recruited to this kind of judgment through the simple device of making him a rich Southerner. Just over a decade after *The Birth of a Nation* celebrated the revived Klan as chivalrous defenders of pure white womanhood against racial inferiors, audiences would have known how to read this character's regional origin and class as implying his belief that white civilization stood or fell with the chastity of its women.[87] At the same time, his status as an upright Southern gentleman suggested that he might not understand that flappers like Crawford could drink, smoke, and dance without compromising the sexual virtue that had been Victorian women's core contribution to white civilization. This suggestion is confirmed in a scene in which Anita Page's mother, strategizing about how to get all that money in the family, warns her that men are "old-fashioned" about their wives. Southern wealth, in this context, represents an ideal of whiteness that is infinitely to be desired for its stability, but that is simultaneously at risk because it is not modern enough to allow for the coexistence of self-government and erotic expressiveness.

Page therefore feigns what she calls "purity" by pretending she doesn't drink or smoke, by enacting physical timidity, and finally by apologizing for not being "modern." She drives her point home with the murmured suggestion that Crawford lacks the sexual self-control required for a position as a

Southern lady. So the eligible Southern bachelor marries Crawford's simpering antagonist. Alas, after the honeymoon he discovers that his lily-white, beruffled wife is a tippling gold-digger who thinks of marriage as a meal ticket and a license to stop performing the artificial maidenly purity her mother imposed. The only respect in which her performance of "purity" approaches authenticity is her complete lack of sexual interest in her husband.[88] Anita Page's character is a liar, a thief, and a drunk. Her insensitivity is the more damaging because it is matched by her lack of self-restraint; she seems to have no authentic feelings of her own, and she is appallingly indifferent to other people's.

The film depicts the demure "Victorian" blonde as emotionally and ethically rotten, while the modern "jazz baby" is stout-hearted and true. Joan Crawford's character demonstrates her white self-control in scene after scene. She sips at cocktails—but never gulps. She makes herself a pleasure to be around—but never leads men on. She "pets"—but never lets things get out of hand. She even performs the Charleston as a solo dance, so that it demonstrates her passionate vitality without suggesting that she is available to be touched. When she offers the Southerner what she calls a "friendly kiss," she is clearly startled by the intensity with which he responds and lets him see that that was both intensely thrilling and not what she had in mind.

Crawford's beau misinterprets her willingness to register that thrill as indicating faulty self-control, when in actuality it records the modernity of her whiteness: she is free enough to experience and express the depth of her feelings for him precisely because she knows how to control her sensitivity. When her dream of romance is dashed, she quickly disciplines herself to put her broken heart behind her without complaint or self-pity. Her apparently natural joyfulness is then exposed as the outward sign of good training and a strong will. The fact that Crawford's character is represented as the "right" wife for the Southern gentleman suggests that her virtues are racial ones. She stands for the energetic, but controlled, modern sexuality through which ideal whiteness was reproduced; she is Norma with a more fashionable haircut and in constant motion.

In contrast, the superficial whiteness of Anita Page's character, and her willingness to mobilize it to get what she wants, conceal her failure to embody its core modern values. The problem is not that her ancestry is doubtful. Rather, it is that her character is too tangled up in parental control and material considerations to develop to the point that Dell would have

called "adult heterosexuality." But normality triumphs in the end. Page's character gets killed off for her failures of self-government: she falls down the stairs during a drunken tirade, and her death sets Prince Charming free to marry Crawford after all. In Hollywood, the wages of normal whiteness include getting your man.

Crawford's character highlights the odd contradiction in the normative ideal of whiteness, which is both "natural" to our open-hearted heroine and the result of constant self-restraint. Modern love required erotic sensitivity, but also social respectability; white marriage and the future of the race required a carefully calibrated amalgam of passion and sober self-control. Despite its mobilization of the conventional contrast between modern and Victorian sexuality, the film does not simply assess erotic expressiveness as inherently good. Sensitivity is crucial, but that very sensitivity makes self-government equally necessary and complex. Crawford originally loses her true love because she is not circumspect enough, while a third "dancing daughter" spends the film suffering because she lost her virginity prior to her marriage. Her misery is depicted not as the payback for her fall from virtue but as the consequence of a rigid, overcontrolled upbringing, which left her without the independence and self-discipline she needed to recognize the difference between sexual desire and the love that leads to marriage.

Discipline and restraint had to be internalized if white moderns were to make the normal marriages on which the legitimate reproduction of whiteness depended. At the same time, because those white marriages had a responsibility to combine respectability with fruitfulness, discipline could not dominate sensitivity. Thus Crawford combined passion, prudence, and purity in her performance as the ideal modern maiden.[89] The tension inherent in this position is registered in Crawford's character's name: she dances on tabletops, but she is called Diana, an ancient name for the ancient white virtue of chaste self-restraint. *Our Dancing Daughters* thus distinguishes between externally imposed repressive "Victorian" decorum and the modern capacity for genuine erotic self-government. Both were expressions of civilized whiteness, but the latter represented a more advanced state of civilization's development; the contrast between them therefore makes the modern form seem like a better approximation to the core racial ideals of sensitivity and self-control. In that sense, the marital erotics of "adult heterosexuality" make moderns seem more white, better at whiteness, than Victorians. Crawford's reward for her sensitivity and self-control is the class and race

status of Southern ladyhood, but the benefits flow both ways: pure Southern whiteness receives a shot of modern sexual energy from its recognition of her as a legitimate mother for the race.

Our Dancing Daughters reminds us that highly sexualized explorations of the meaning, limits, and relative worth of modern, normal forms of whiteness were part of everyday middle-American life in the decades before the Second World War. The film launched Crawford to stardom and spawned two sequels, which played in Peoria as well as in New York and Los Angeles. At about the same time marital advice literature, middlebrow magazines, health exhibits at museums and world's fairs, sociological monographs, medical and psychological sex research, and other cultural media explored very similar subject matter in strikingly similar terms. Though class, regional, religious, and political differences certainly influenced both the content and the tone of many such explorations, by the end of the 1930s emergent mass culture featured a relatively "monolithic" ideal of normal whiteness. That whiteness was inseparable from a carefully governed normative heterosexuality. Statues like Norma and Normman and films like *Our Dancing Daughters* make it clear that, when it was under construction, "normality" was far from invisible or opaque. The following chapters examine the process of normality's construction, from its relatively contested origins in Gilded Age bourgeois culture to the point where it became, well, normal—so ubiquitous, so taken for granted, that its power became hard to see.