



HALL, GRANVILLE STANLEY

1844–1924

Psychologist and Pedagogue

The founder and first president of Clark University, Granville Stanley Hall formulated theories on child development, psychology, play, and race that greatly influenced theories about white manhood and male sexuality around the turn of the twentieth century.

Hall's chief concern was neurasthenia, a medical condition of mental and physical exhaustion first diagnosed by the physician George M. Beard in 1869. Neurasthenia tended to affect white middle-class men who feared that industrialization and urbanization undermined their ability to meet contemporary expectations of manhood. While men such as Theodore Roosevelt advocated the "strenuous life" as an antidote, Hall supported a preventive approach that targeted adolescent boys.

The concept of organic memory, which states that each individual inherits the history of his or her own race, informed Hall's thinking on child development, race, and the formation of the self. Hall advocated organized play as means through which boys could counteract the allegedly debilitating and effeminizing effects of urban-industrial "overcivilization" and achieve a reinvigorated white masculinity by tapping the primitive energy embedded in their genetic make-up. Under proper guidance, Hall believed, the primitive impulses in boys could be directed into a forceful adult masculinity able to withstand the pressures of urban, industrial life.

This prescription for the reinvigoration of white, middle-class masculinity influenced Hall's understanding of sexuality. Influenced by his New England Protestant background, and by middle-class Victorian attitudes generally, Hall initially regarded sexuality as a morally and physiologically enervating force that needed to be contained and restricted. But his insistence on tapping and directing atavistic impulses through organized play for the purpose of creating a forceful, reinvigorated masculinity eventually led Hall to suggest that the sexual energy of boys and young men could serve as a substitute for depleted nervous energy. This new link between sexuality and the development of adult masculinity became one of the main themes in Hall's two-volume study on pedagogy and child psychology, *Adolescence* (1904).

Changing scientific theories of genetic inheritance helped to stimulate this change in Hall's views on sexuality. As he began his work on *Adolescence* in the early 1890s, scientists had begun to abandon the postulate developed by the French naturalist Jean-Baptiste-Pierre-Antoine de Monet Chevalier de Lamarck, which maintained that genetic inheritance was shaped by parental behavior, and instead began to recognize the role and function of chromosomes. This shift in scientific knowledge about genetic inheritance prompted Hall to alter his earlier repressive views on manhood and male sexuality as he completed *Adolescence*.

While Hall did not advocate free sexual expressiveness, his acceptance of sexuality as a positive force in a man's life nonetheless represented a profound departure from a Victorian emphasis on restraint and suppression. In *Adolescence*, Hall argued that sex was not immoral, but sacred because it was part of God's purpose of evolution through procreation. This new appreciation of sexuality and the body led Hall to embrace the concept of "muscular Christianity" as an ideal of male spirituality.

Hall's writings helped to redefine men's approach to their sexuality and played a critical role in shifting understandings of manliness from the self-restrained manhood characteristic of middle-class Victorian culture to the more assertive, and at times aggressive, masculinity that developed at the turn of the twentieth century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Race and Gender in the United States, 1880–1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Ross, Dorothy. G. *Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

FURTHER READING

- Cavallo, Dominick. *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880–1920*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
- Gosling, F. G. *Before Freud: Neurasthenia and the American Medical Community, 1870–1910*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Lutz, Tom. *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Russett, Cynthia Eagle. *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.

SELECTED WRITINGS

Hall, Granville Stanley. *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. 2 vols. New York: Appleton, 1904.

———. *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist*. New York: Appleton, 1923.

RELATED ENTRIES

Adolescence; Body; Boyhood; Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory; Health; Gulick, Luther Halsey; Medicine; Middle-Class Manhood; Muscular Christianity; Progressive Era; Roosevelt, Theodore; Victorian Era; Whiteness

—Thomas Winter

HEALTH

Throughout American history, issues of health, ranging from hygiene to disease prevention to diet, have been fundamental to cultural constructions of masculinity. In the late eighteenth century a series of transformations in American life, especially the American Revolution and such modernizing developments as urbanization and industrialization, raised questions and concerns about the meaning of American manhood and the nature of American life. In this environment, the strength and vigor of the male body began to be linked to the well-being of the nation. Since then, the cultural link between health and masculinity has been reinforced by the fact that the chief spokespersons regarding matters of health have overwhelmingly been men. Further, in the late nineteenth century a growing tendency to define masculinity in physical and biological terms emerged.

The Revolutionary Era

The first strong cultural link between health and masculinity in American life accompanied the founding of the nation in the late eighteenth century. As American patriots sought to define American nationhood by proposing a distinction between virtuous republican American men and the corrupt and effete British government and aristocracy, the Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush formulated a version of republican manhood grounded in bodily health. Rush counseled American men that a strict vegetarian diet would improve strength and virility, while meats, spicy foods, and

alcohol would produce disease by overstimulating the body. He associated a plain diet with the simple and virtuous living characteristic of the ideal republican man, and rich foods, by contrast, with the luxurious living of foppish British aristocrats. For Rush and the many American men who took his advice, good health became a manifestation of manly citizenship and the basis of a stable republic.

The Nineteenth Century

The association between health and manhood was reinforced during the early to mid-nineteenth century as industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of a national market economy raised new and interrelated concerns about male behavior and the direction of national development. By the 1830s, these concerns had produced a spate of reform movements—many of them influenced by the Protestant revivalism of the Second Great Awakening—intended to shape American male behavior and the emerging urban-industrial capitalist system. Many of these movements were grounded in the assumption that American men, loosed from traditional moral restraints of church and community, required self-control and spiritual grounding (called “character” by nineteenth-century Americans) to ensure social stability, moral order, and economic productivity.

Among these movements was a push for health and dietary reform, led by Sylvester Graham. Although Graham addressed both men and women, his advice primarily targeted young men, on whose shoulders he rested the future of the nation. Believing that consumption of meat, alcohol, tea, coffee, and tobacco would lead to disease, Graham urged American men to adopt a strict diet of vegetables, grains, and water, as well as a regimen of moderate exercise. The resulting physical and spiritual health, he counseled, would direct the energies of the body away from wasteful and debilitating sensual indulgence and toward the self-discipline and the competitive economic success that he and his contemporaries deemed fundamental to manliness and national strength. Joining many Americans in associating masculinity with public economic activity and the threat of overindulgence (and women with moral purity, motherhood, and domesticity), Graham suggested that men’s health began at home, in dietary practices and foods regulated and prepared by their wives and mothers. He thus rooted his notions of healthy manhood firmly in the emerging Victorian gender dichotomy that historians call the “cult of domesticity.” Indeed, many Victorian Americans underscored their association of health with masculinity by suggesting that women were naturally weak and prone to unhealthfulness.