Was Marie White? The Trajectory of a Question in the United States

By Nell Irvin Painter

My topic is taxonomy: the principles and practices of classifying living organisms, in this case human beings, into discrete categories.[1] My examples, verbal and visual, come from the realm of the imagination—from literature, science, and visual imagery as well as from scholarship—for the theories of race come more from cultural imagination than biological fact. This is a discourse history, not an event history, and its question asks for an answer from the conceptual rather than the behavioral realm. I am posing a question about meaning.

The taxonomy here relates to the white races—yes, *white*, the usually unraced race. Because American history bulges with analyses of the changing meanings of nonwhite race, we are accustomed to making sense of alternations in the meaning of colored race; we hear the passage from *colored* to *Negro* to *Afro-American* to *black* to *African American* as changing discourse. But we are much less able to comprehend the lesser-known but also flexible discourse of whiteness. Moreover, I use the plural *white races*, because for the better part of three-quarters of a century, educated Americans believed in the existence of more than one European race.

The United States census offers one obvious means of exploring American taxonomy, for every ten years the census enumerates the American population in order to apportion congressional representation and to supply meaningful information. Census categories have

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[1] The bibliography on the subject of taxonomy is huge in the field of the history of science. The classic work remains Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1970), originally published as *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* ([Paris], 1966).

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changed over time, as meaningful categories—what officials need to know—have changed over time.

The first census, taken in 1790, enumerated just five categories of Americans: (1) free white males sixteen and over, (2) free white males under sixteen, (3) free white females, (4) all other free persons, and (5) slaves. Three descriptive phrases modified the only race mentioned (white), and two categories demarcated slave and free legal statuses. (See Figure 1.) Unfree white persons, of whom there were still many in the new union, seem to have fallen through the cracks in 1790, though the insistence on the qualifier *free* points to the existence of an unfree white status. If all whites were free, there would have been no need to add *free* to *white*. By the 1820 census this problem had been fixed through an enumeration of "all other persons, except Indians not taxed." For these censuses, *free* formed a very important classification not identical with *white*.[2]

As unfree white people disappeared, poor, working-class immigrants appeared in the census. The 1820 census was the first to seek information on the number of unnaturalized immigrants.[3] Every ten years census categories kept changing, as needs altered and taxonomical categories shifted, including by race. Throughout the history of the U.S. census, non-Europeans and part-Europeans have been counted as part of the American population, while the symbolic racial identity of Americans long remained white only.

We can date the rhetorical equation of *American* with descendants of Europeans to the quickly translated, widely read, and infinitely quoted *Letters from an American Farmer* of 1782 by the French soldier-diplomat-author Michel-Guillaume-Jean de Crèvecoeur (1735–1813). The question, "What is an American?" appears in Letter III. Crèvecoeur answers, "He is either an European or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country."[4] Until well after the Second World War the habit persisted of contrasting *the American* with others in the population, if not exactly un-American, then not 100 percent American, either: in mid-twentieth-century parlance, they were *the Negro*, *the Indian*, and

[2] U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, *Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses from 1790 to 2000* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 5, 6 (quotation), 129.

[3] *Ibid.*, 6.

[4] George McMichael, Frederick Crews, J. C. Levenson, Leo Marx, and David E. Smith, eds., *Anthology of American Literature* (6th ed., 2 vols.; Upper Saddle River, N.J., 1997), I, 448–50. Crèvecoeur published *Letters from an American Farmer . . .* (London, 1782) under the name J. Hector St. John, and he is often identified as J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. Vermonters named the northern town of St. Johnsbury in his honor.

SCHEDULE of the whole Number of PERSONS within the several Districts of the UNITED STATES, taken according to "An Act providing for the Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States;" passed March the 1st, 1790.

DISTRICTS.	Free white Males of sixteen years and upwards, including heads of families.	Free white Males under sixteen years.	Free white Females including heads of families.	All other free persons.	Slaves.	Total.
• Vermont ✓	22,435	22,328	40,505	255	16	85,539
New-Hampshire	36,086	34,851	70,160	630	158	141,885
{ Maine ✓	24,384	24,748	46,870	538	NONE	96,540 }
{ Massachusetts	95,153	87,289	190,582	5,463	NONE	378,787 }
Rhode-Island	16,019	15,799	32,652	3,407	948	68,825
Connecticut	60,523	54,403	117,448	2,808	2,764	237,946
New-York	83,700	78,122	152,320	4,654	21,324	340,120
New-Jersey	45,251	41,416	83,287	2,762	11,423	184,139
Pennsylvania	110,788	106,948	206,363	6,537	3,737	434,373
Delaware	11,783	12,143	22,384	3,899	8,887	59,094
Maryland	55,915	51,339	101,395	8,043	103,036	319,728
{ Virginia	110,936	116,135	215,046	12,866	292,627	747,610 }
{ Kentucky ✓	15,154	17,057	28,922	114	12,430	73,677 }
North-Carolina	69,988	77,506	140,710	4,975	100,572	393,751
South-Carolina	-	-	-	-	-	-
Georgia	13,103	14,044	25,739	398	29,264	82,548

	Free white Males of twenty-one years and upwards, including heads of families.	Free white Males under twenty-one years of age.	Free white Females, including heads of families.	All other Persons.	807,186 Slaves.	Total.
S. Western Territory	6,271	10,277	15,365	361	3,417	25,691
N. Do.	-	-	-			

540,603 | 3,680,753

Truly stated from the original Returns deposited in the Office of the Secretary of State.

TH: JEFFERSON.

October 24, 1791.

• This return was not signed by the marshal, but was enclosed and referred to in a letter written and signed by him.

Figure 1. U.S. Census, 1790, "Schedule of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States . . . ," from *Return of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States . . .* (Philadelphia, 1791), 3.

the Oriental. Today their descendants share the individuality formerly a hallmark of whiteness through plural terminology, such as *African Americans*, *Native Americans*, and *Asian Americans*. And no matter how fraught the inclusion, all are considered American. That is now, in the twenty-first century.

In this essay, however, I will take you back several steps into the early nineteenth century, through a period when all racial meanings changed more than once. Actually, by the early nineteenth century, racial meanings had *already* changed, due in part to the influence of science and taxonomy, due in part to the exigencies of protecting the institution of slavery and narrowing access to citizenship. Eighteenth-century discourse, as exemplified in the work of Samuel Stanhope Smith, a president of Princeton College (then called the College of New Jersey), recognized the inevitability of mixture in human populations. In the eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries, educated Americans acknowledged the reality of racial mixture before coming to prefer cleaner racial categorization.[5] By the 1830s mixed-race identities were being disappeared into darker-skinned identities. *White* was emerging as a pure category, one of the classifications taxonomists preferred. Mixed-race people became *Negro*, *Indian*, or *Other*. Looking back on the discourse history of the white race and on the current state of racial taxonomy, I end with a question regarding a fictional early-nineteenth-century American named Marie Nelson. How does Marie's racial identity translate into our current views? Was Marie, in actual fact, white?

Marie is the central figure in a largely forgotten but once-honored novel by a now largely forgotten but once-honored French intellectual, Gustave de Beaumont (1802–1865). Beaumont's 1835 sociological novel, *Marie, ou l'esclavage aux États-Unis: tableau de mœurs américaines* (*Marie, or Slavery in the United States*) made racial identity an integral rather than an incidental facet of American culture.[6] Marie, one of Beaumont's protagonists, is an eighteen-year-old, white-skinned beauty living in Baltimore with her father, Daniel, and twenty-year-old brother, George. Theresa Spencer, the mother of Marie and George, is no longer present, having died of grief after being revealed as carrying a drop of black blood. Before discussing *Marie* and Marie

[5] Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, edited by Winthrop D. Jordan (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 30, 47–55, 87, 106. See also John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore, 2003), 271–303.

[6] Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie, ou l'esclavage aux États-Unis: tableau de mœurs américaines* (2 vols.; Paris, 1835).

more fully, let me introduce the author and his far more famous best friend.

Gustave de Beaumont—the fellow lawyer, roommate in Versailles in the 1820s, traveling companion, lifelong friend, biographer, and literary executor of Alexis de Tocqueville—accompanied Tocqueville in the United States in 1831–1832 and in Britain and Ireland in 1835. Tocqueville and Beaumont contrasted in appearance and in mien. Beaumont, three years older than Tocqueville, was taller, heavier, stronger, and healthier. A kind of good ole boy, Beaumont made friends easily and fit in with the crowd. Tocqueville, conversely, was short (about 5′6″) and sickly and appeared rigid, affected, and a bit pompous. The Paris-based German poet Heinrich Heine summed them up: "One, the severe thinker, the other, the man of gushing feeling, go together like a bottle of vinegar and a bottle of oil."[7]

Aristocratic lawyers of a progressive turn of mind, both Beaumont and Tocqueville came from conservative, conventional, Catholic families in northern France, Beaumont from the Loire River Valley, Tocqueville from Normandy. Both rose in the legal service of King Charles X, prospering in Versailles until the king's abdication in the wake of the 1830 July Revolution. Upheaval at the top threatened their futures, so Beaumont and Tocqueville took a self-financed sabbatical from France in 1831, ostensibly to study prison reform in the United States. Prisons quickly became boring. Besides, Tocqueville, especially, had bigger ambitions.

Through mid-1832 Tocqueville and Beaumont intended to write a joint study of the United States in general, *Institutions et mœurs américaines (American Institutions and Customs).*[8] To this day, Tocqueville is known for analyzing American institutions and seeing *equality of conditions* as the defining characteristic of American society. He had actually conceived of his *"idée mère"* even before setting foot in the United States.[9] But in the United States, the two travelers' interests diverged. During their first week in the United States, in New York City, Tocqueville's central concept jelled, and he did not subsequently alter his view. Beaumont, however, ultimately renounced

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[7] Jacques Coenen-Huther, *Tocqueville* (Paris, 1997), 15; Seymour Drescher, ed. and trans., *Tocqueville and Beaumont on Social Reform* (New York, 1968), 201 (quotation).

[8] Drescher, ed. and trans., *Tocqueville and Beaumont on Social Reform*, 210. The advertisement for the joint study appears on the back cover of the copy of their book on the American penitentiary system, *Du système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis, et de son application en France; suivi d'un appendice sur les colonies pénales et de notes statistiques* (Paris, 1833), that was sent to Jared Sparks and is now in Harvard University's Widener Library.

[9] Coenen-Huther, *Tocqueville*, 31–32, 34–35.

equality of conditions as reflecting American reality. While Tocqueville concentrated on American *institutions*, the contradictions in American *mœurs* fascinated Beaumont.

Back in France their report on American prisons proceeded unevenly. Tocqueville fell into a depressed funk, leaving Beaumont to write *Du système pénitentiare*, published in 1833 under both their names.[10] Beaumont then wrote a novel, *Marie, ou l'esclavage aux États-Unis: tableau de mœurs américaines*. Tocqueville revived and wrote his own study of the United States, *De la démocratie en Amérique (Democracy in America)*. The two volumes of *Marie* and the two parts making up the first volume of Tocqueville's *De la démocratie en Amérique* appeared in 1835.[11] The novel won Beaumont the Prix Montyon of the Académie Française, as did Tocqueville's nonfiction work, which immediately made him famous. Both authors gained entry into the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, though only Tocqueville went on to induction into the far more prestigious Académie Française after an assiduous campaign for acceptance.

De la démocratie en Amérique was translated into English immediately and widely and warmly reviewed. *Democracy in America* must hold the record as the most quoted French text in the United States. The Princeton University Library holds thirty-one English editions.[12] *Marie* went through five editions in seven years, but its first English translation had to wait until 1958.[13] The difference in the two works' tone and their conclusions produced a difference in their reception.

In *Democracy in America* Tocqueville describes an exceptional society derived from England and locates the source of this exceptionalism in American democracy. American political democracy sets the tone in both the private and public spheres, with *equality* as Tocqueville's keyword. The first page of *Democracy in America* mentions "the equality of social conditions" twice. The following three hundred plus pages elaborate that basic assumption. In addition to

[10] Beaumont and Tocqueville, *Du système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis*.

[11] For a biographical portrait of Beaumont, see Alvis L. Tinnin, "Introduction," in Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie; or, Slavery in the United States: A Novel of Jacksonian America*, translated by Barbara Chapman (Baltimore, 1999), xxix–xxxiii. (Subsequent citations of the novel refer to this edition.) The 1999 edition is a new edition of the novel's first English-language translation, first published in 1958. In addition to Tinnin's introduction, it contains a new introduction by Gerard Fergerson. A more complete translation of the novel's title would include Beaumont's whole subtitle: *A Portrait of American Customs*.

[12] Tocqueville published the two parts forming the second volume of *Democracy in America* in 1840.

[13] Tinnin, "Introduction," xxv.

equality, Englishness marks Americans. The opening statements and the hundreds more pages that follow establish the United States not only as a country populated by Europeans but also as a population directly descended from the English. The phrase "the English race" appears repeatedly in headings and in the body of the text. In the conclusion of Volume 1 Tocqueville glimpses "the whole future of the English race in the New World." Chapter 3 of Part 1 of Volume 2 bears the title, "Why the Americans Show More Aptitude and Taste for General Ideas than Their Forefathers the English."[14]

The American of *Democracy in America* is a middle-class male northerner, more exactly a New Englander of British, Puritan descent. He lacks brilliance and bores his guests, for he dedicates his existence to business. *The* American's heart is in the right place, right enough for him to be about building a country of certain future greatness. Tocqueville's flattering description of Americans elevated his stature as a keen analyst. His depiction still enjoys wide acceptance as a correct and complete portrait of the people of the United States.

Beaumont's Americans also come from England. They also disregard art and letters to concentrate on making money. For example, Beaumont entitles one of the twelve sociological appendixes following his novel "Note on American Crudeness." Beyond their shared French disdain for the provincial nature of U.S.-American culture, Beaumont's was not Tocqueville's America, nor, consequently, was Beaumont's literary reception to partake of Tocqueville's popularity.[15] Beaumont took more interest than Tocqueville in conventions of identity in a multiracial society, foregrounding its injustices. Beaumont came to see the United States as an aristocracy rather than a democracy: a white race aristocracy—a depiction hardly destined to win the author a vast American following.

The novel *Marie* unfolds through the words of Ludovic, a cultured French immigrant to the United States. Beaumont's choice of a Germanic name points toward the French race-thinking he shared with his friend Tocqueville and that Tocqueville shared with his protégé, Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau.[16] Beaumont's, Tocqueville's, and

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[14] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, translated by Gerald E. Bevan and edited by Isaac Kramnick (New York, 2003), 11 (first quotation), 479 (second and third quotations), 4 (fourth quotation).

[15] Beaumont, *Marie*, 225. Beaumont makes Daniel Nelson, the father of Marie, a proud New England descendant of an English ancestor and describes "the girls of Baltimore" as "renowned above all others for their beauty. Their blue eyes bear witness to their English origin . . . ." *Ibid.*, 16 (quotations), 32.

[16] Tocqueville and Gobineau began corresponding in 1843, when Tocqueville was over forty and Gobineau less than thirty. When Tocqueville became French minister of foreign affairs in

Gobineau's Teutonic ideology imagined their French aristocracy as descendants of the Germanic Franks. The French peasantry, in contrast, they cast as descendants of the defeated Celtic Gauls.[17] By naming his sympathetic narrator "Ludovic," Beaumont makes him a Frankish, Germanic aristocrat, by dint of descent or character.[18]

Ludovic lives as a hermit at the very outer limit of American civilization on the banks of the Saginaw River in Michigan. He tells his tragic story to an unnamed French traveler (Beaumont? Tocqueville?) who cherishes a positive conception of American society. The traveler conceives of the United States as "liberal and generous. Every man's rights are protected here." Ludovic dismisses the traveler's views as "illusions" and teaches him with lessons from the story of his own disenchantment.[19]

Ludovic had come to the United States as an idealist in the mid-1820s, after the Greek revolution had disappointed him. Continuing his search for true freedom and democracy in Baltimore, he lodges with the wealthy, fashionable Nelson family: Daniel, the father, and his two handsome children, twenty-year-old George and eighteen-year-old Marie. Daniel savors an abundance of worldly honors, permitting him and son George to move comfortably in Baltimore's most elite circles. Daniel and George take pleasure in their prominence. The lovely daughter, Marie, however, remains withdrawn and downcast. Her only excursions take her to the asylum, where her gentle touch pacifies even the most traumatized, and into the woods, where she communes with nature in solitude. Ludovic finds Marie's ability to sing beautifully and play the harp and piano sensitively rare among American women. As a woman, Marie seems ideal.

Ludovic repeatedly describes Marie as "a dazzling beauty," her complexion "even whiter than the swans of the Great Lakes." Marie's "lily whiteness" "surpasses [marble] in whiteness." "One would have thought her a European girl," for she combines all the best qualities of

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June 1849, he made Gobineau his chief of staff. Tocqueville resigned a few months later, but not before appointing Gobineau French ambassador to Switzerland. Tocqueville disapproved of Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines (An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races)* (4 vols. in 2; Paris, 1853–1855) and told him so. Nonetheless, their friendly correspondence continued until Tocqueville's death in 1859. See Romain Rolland, "Le conflit de deux générations: Tocqueville et Gobineau," *Europe*, 3 (October 1923), 68–69.

[17] Coenen-Huther, *Tocqueville*, 16–17; John Nef, "Truth, Belief, and Civilization: Tocqueville and Gobineau," *Review of Politics*, 25 (October 1963), 467.

[18] The name *Ludovic* comes from the Latin *Ludovicus*. In French *Ludovic*, like *Louis*, represents the Frankish/German name *Ludwig*. If Beaumont had wanted to make Ludovic a latter-day Gaul, he would have called him Louis.

[19] Beaumont, *Marie*, 13.

women throughout the Western world.[20] Having fallen in love with Marie, Ludovic wants to marry her. His desire raises a gigantic obstacle. Marie has received the invisible taint of black blood from her Louisiana Creole mother, Theresa Spencer. "The whiteness of Theresa's complexion was dazzling; [and] nothing in her features disclosed the flaw in her origin," but according to American mores, her mulatto great-grandmother a century earlier raced her as black. Marie, therefore, is not white, and American custom forbids marriages across the color line. Even though Daniel Nelson, a New Englander, had married Theresa despite her tainted blood, he explains to Ludovic that "a white man can never marry a woman of color," for "[t]he stigma remains, though the color can no longer be seen."[21]

Marie laments her social identity, calling herself "cursed in my mother's womb" with the "base blood" that consigns her to an "[a]ccursed race." Indeed, Beaumont more or less agrees, describing her as "[a] colored woman."[22] Although Marie's "taint" does not dissuade her French suitor Ludovic, Americans' inherited aristocracy of race elevates her invisible blackness into an insuperable barrier to marriage with a white man, even in the so-called free North.

Just as Ludovic is overcoming the Nelsons' reluctance to let him marry Marie, the life of Marie's twenty-year-old brother, George, is transformed. As George and his father are voting at a Baltimore polling station, a malefactor reveals that white-skinned George is a colored man. George does not deny the charge. Defiant and angry, he resolves to exact vengeance against white supremacy by joining a planned insurrection of his "unfortunate brothers," blacks and Indians, in Virginia and the Carolinas. George works out his destiny along the lines of invisibly Jewish Daniel Deronda in George Eliot's 1876 eponymous novel. But George Nelson's Israel lies in the United States South and affords no happy ending. After the black people hang back and only the Indians rise up, George dies a victim of the failed insurrection.[23]

Marie's infinitesimal invisible blackness transforms her intended marriage to a Frenchman into miscegenation, an infraction that inspires

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[20] *Ibid.*, 32 (first quotation), 41 (fifth quotation), 58 (second quotation), 67 (third quotation), 94 (fourth quotation).

[21] *Ibid.*, 55 (first quotation), 57 (second quotation), 63 (third quotation).

[22] *Ibid.*, 93 (fourth quotation), 120 (first quotation), 168 (second and third quotations).

[23] *Ibid.*, 118–19 (quotation on p. 119), 164–65, 171. George accuses the cowardly black people of inaction. *Ibid.*, 119. American ethnic cleansing of Native Americans revolted Beaumont, who includes several scenes of Indian decency and American injustice. He relocates the southern Trail of Tears, which had shocked him and Tocqueville during their travels, into the Great Lakes, where part of the action of *Marie* takes place. Two of the twelve appendixes Beaumont attaches to *Marie* concern the condition of Native Americans.

a full-scale riot in New York City as they are beginning their wedding ceremony.[24] Their marriage disrupted, Ludovic and Marie flee to the farthest wilderness of American civilization, where Marie dies. After fruitless attempts to uplift Native Americans, Ludovic returns to permanent exile in the wilds of Saginaw.

In Gustave de Beaumont's 1835 novel—written in the shadow of Nat Turner's murderous uprising and as the American abolitionist movement was gaining momentum—race resides in the blood. A century-old, single drop from Africa transmits a permanent taint. Beaumont recognizes the arbitrary nature of American racism and racial identity, which he mocks in the novel's foreword. He relates his confusion when an American describes a woman "whiter than a lily" as "colored," because "she had a mulatto among her forebears." This same American accepts as white a woman "the same color as the mulattoes," because "local tradition affirms that the blood which flows in her veins is Spanish."[25] Yet Beaumont echoes American definitions.

Despite Beaumont's skepticism, Marie emerges from *Marie* as a colored girl. Despite her skin of a dazzling whiteness and her residence among Baltimore's white elite, Marie belongs to the enslaved race. To stand beside Beaumont in 1835 and ask whether Marie was white is too easy a question. We need to follow American conventions of white racial identity a good deal farther into the working-class immigration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the rage for Anglo-Saxon blond hair and blue eyes, when mere whiteness did not signify superiority. White race may have sufficed for men at the ballot box, but American culture drew additional lines.

Between the 1835 of Beaumont's *Marie* and the early twentieth century, American race theory continued to racialize people with African ancestry, but increasingly race talk extended also to poor, hardworking people from Europe. In the mid-nineteenth century the impoverished, potato-famine Irish fell victim to racist stereotyping. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people from southern and eastern Europe—summed up as Slavs, Italians, and Hebrews—were effectively barred from immigration to the United States as inherently and immutably defective. Images from the popular press and from definitive scholarship show the spread of racialization among people with white skin and no invisible taint from Africa.

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[24] Beaumont does not use the word *miscegenation*, coined only in 1864.
[25] Beaumont, *Marie*, 5.

Starvation already menaced Ireland in the 1830s when Tocqueville and Beaumont were on the road. A bad situation worsened into a deadly crisis between 1845 and 1855, when the potato famine sent two million impoverished Irish Catholic immigrants—or, as many of them felt, exiles from starvation—to the United States, especially into New England. Irish immigrants found low-paid work in manufacturing, railroad and canal construction, and domestic service. Irishmen gained a sorry reputation for mindless bloc voting for the Democratic (southern-based and proslavery) Party and for drunkenness, brawling, laziness, pauperism, and crime. Middle-class Americans casually referred to poor Irishmen as "Paddies," drawing upon stereotypes as old as the early eighteenth century.[26] Paddy jokes along the lines of twentieth-century Polish jokes amused eighteenth-century Americans. The massive immigration of impoverished Irish people deepened a preexisting contrast between the Anglo-Saxon, English-descended, Protestant "American" and Celtic Irish Catholics, to the detriment of the latter, as illustrated in U.S. print culture.

Stereotypes of poor, ugly, drunken, violent, superstitious, but charmingly rascally Paddy and his ugly, ignorant, dirty, fecund, long-suffering Bridget differed fundamentally from depictions of sober, civilized Anglo-Saxons. Most "Paddy" phrases—*Paddy Doyle* for a jail cell, *in a Paddy* for being in a rage, *Paddyland* for Ireland, and *Paddy* for white person—have by now lost currency in English. *Paddy wagon* for police wagon survives.

Ugly cartoons of an apelike Irish "Paddy" appeared frequently in English and American periodicals. A mid-nineteenth-century American print contrasts the wealthy Englishwoman, the pioneering nurse Florence Nightingale, with a viciously stereotyped poor Irish woman, "Bridget McBruiser." (See Figure 2.) Although this image appears in a book on the morphology of the human head by the American phrenologist Samuel R. Wells, it uses an Englishwoman to convey excellence "in *quality*, in *size*, and in *degree of civilization.*" Wells explains that Nightingale's head "is developed in the 'upper story,' while the feminine 'McBruiser,' whom we have placed by her side, lives in the basement mentally as well as bodily." "[T]he one is bright, intellectual, and spiritual; the other opaque, dull, and

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[26] Already in 1714 Sir Richard Steele's "Poor Paddy" "swears his whole Week's Gains away." See Richard Steele, [comp.], *Poetical Miscellanies, Consisting of Original Poems and Translations* (London, 1714), 201 (cited in the entry for *Paddy* in the Oxford English Dictionary Online).

CONTRASTED FACES.

" Look on this picture, and then on that."—Shakspeare.

Fig. 147. - Florence Nightingale.   Fig. 148.—Bridget McBruiser.

Figure 2. "Contrasted Faces," Florence Nightingale and Bridget McBruiser, from Samuel R. Wells, *New Physiognomy, or, Signs of Character, as Manifested through Temperament and External Forms, and Especially in "the Human Face Divine"* (New York, 1871), 537.

sensual."[27] The figure of Florence Nightingale reinforces the identity between the English and the respectable, Anglo-Saxon American.

The stereotypes depicted politics as well as bodily morphology. Thomas Nast, the German-born editorial cartoonist for *Harper's Weekly* in New York, for instance, pictured stereotypical southern freedmen and northern Irishmen as equally unsuited for the vote in Reconstruction after the American Civil War.[28] (See Figure 3.)

Nast's 1876 cartoon does two things at once: it draws upon anti-Irish imagery current in Britain and the United States and translates the two figures' identities into characteristically American racial terms of black and white. The bumpkin clothing and bare feet mark the figure labeled "black" as a poor rural southerner, while the physiognomy, expression,

[27] Samuel R. Wells, *New Physiognomy, or, Signs of Character, as Manifested through Temperament and External Forms, and Especially in "the Human Face Divine"* (New York, 1871), 537–38.
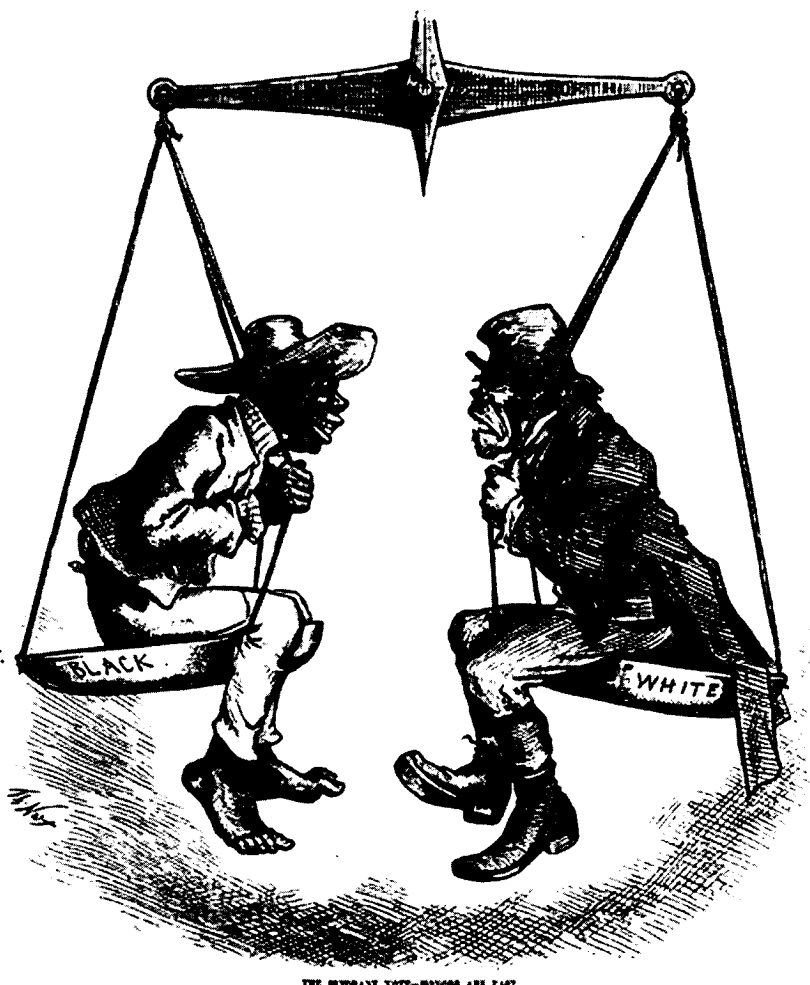[28] Thomas Nast, "The Ignorant Vote—Honors Are Easy" (Cartoon), *Harper's Weekly*, December 9, 1876, http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/971.htm.

THE IGNORANT VOTE – HONORS ARE EASY

Figure 3. Thomas Nast, "The Ignorant Vote—Honors Are Easy," *Harper's Weekly*, December 9, 1876, from http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/971.htm.

and lumpy frock coat of the figure labeled "white" translate as stereo-typically Irish. In the United States, Irish iconography identifies the figure not only as problematical but also, and most importantly, as white. The comparison in Nast's American Reconstruction cartoon reappears constantly in the nineteenth century, before fading with the appearance of new waves of impoverished immigrants. Immigration remained the political issue most often and most passionately debated over nearly half a century in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The questions of how to characterize and what to do about immi-grants from southern and eastern Europe inspired a massive amount of discussion and, finally, restrictive legislation. In a country organized around the idea of race, the "race" of the new immigrants became a popular topic. A Harvard University professor named William Z. Ripley (1867–1941) wrote the book that dictated the scientific facts of the "races of Europe" through the 1920s. Ripley's taxonomy presented a scholarly survey of the immigrants' *racial* backgrounds; it was the most respected and visible account in a virtual tidal wave of commen-tary.[29]

The 1899 publication of his definitive scholarly classification of the European peoples, *The Races of Europe*, endowed Ripley with enor-mous intellectual prestige. Thorough and scholarly—albeit confused and contradictory—*The Races of Europe* helped Ripley gain a profes-sorship at Harvard and earned him the 1908 Huxley Memorial Medal and Lecture of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, the most prestigious international honor in anthropology. Ripley's objective, scholarly tone impressed amateurs and experts by synthesizing many competing systems of racial classification. His was the perfect combination: hundreds of pages of science yielding a simple trilogy of race.

Ripley recognized three and only three European races: Teutonic, Alpine, and Mediterranean. Following European authorities, he made the cephalic index (shape of the head) the one true test of race. The cephalic index is the ratio of the maximum width of the head (from ear to ear) to its maximum length (eyebrows to back), usually multiplied by one hundred for convenience. According to this ratio, anthropolo-gists, and then people on the street, characterized races as either long-headed (or dolichocephalic) or roundheaded (or brachycephalic). Dolichocephalic indexes were less than seventy-five; brachycephalic

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[29] William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York, 1899).

indexes were over eighty. The people with indexes between seventy-five and eighty were labeled mesocephalic.[30]

If dolichocephalic (longheaded) people had light hair and eyes, they were categorized as Teutonic and, therefore, superior. If people had darker hair and eyes and were brachycephalic (roundheaded), they were Alpine and, therefore, inferior. If they had dark hair and eyes and were dolichocephalic (longheaded), they were Mediterranean and, therefore, inferior. If they did not fit any of these three templates—if they had light hair and round heads, for instance—they were considered "disharmonic."[31] (See Figures 4 and 5. In Figure 5, each figure appears in profile as well as frontal view, to make visible the length of the head.) The worship of "dolicho-blonds" reached hysterical heights in the early twentieth century, when the economist Thorstein Veblen wrote about it, but the importance of head shape has largely disappeared in our times. Nonetheless, the "dolicho-blond" beauty ideal lives on in pornography on the World Wide Web.[32]

The scholarly prestige of the cephalic index long outlasted its scientific validity. Well into the 1940s, even staunchly antiracist anthropologists were still including head shape among the bodily "traits" distinguishing one people from another. Today the cephalic index makes little sense, but at the turn of the twentieth century, Ripley proclaimed it the truest and most reliable test of race and illustrated its appearance in photographs of actual people. To lay readers the cephalic index looked and sounded scientific, and to anthropologists it seemed methodologically sound. Ripley even mapped his scheme to demonstrate its scientific validity. (See Figure 6.) According to this map, people in Ireland and England have the same cephalic index, 77–79, making everyone in those islands safely free of brachycephalic traits.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the descendants of the famine Irish had become Irish Americans, and not simply because they had satisfied Americans about the shape of their heads. Seizing the opportunities offered by white male suffrage, patronage jobs, and organized labor, they bettered themselves economically. By the time

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[30] *Ibid.*, 37–38.

[31] *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 39–40 (quotation on p. 39), 121.

[32] See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York, 1912), chap. 9; Veblen, "The Blond Race and the Aryan Culture," *University of Missouri Bulletin*, science ser., 2 (April 1913), 39–57; Veblen, *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (New York, 1914); and http://dildo-girls.adultsextoysonline.org/blond-girl-dildo.html.

Brachycephalic type   Index 87.
Zuid-Beveland, Holland

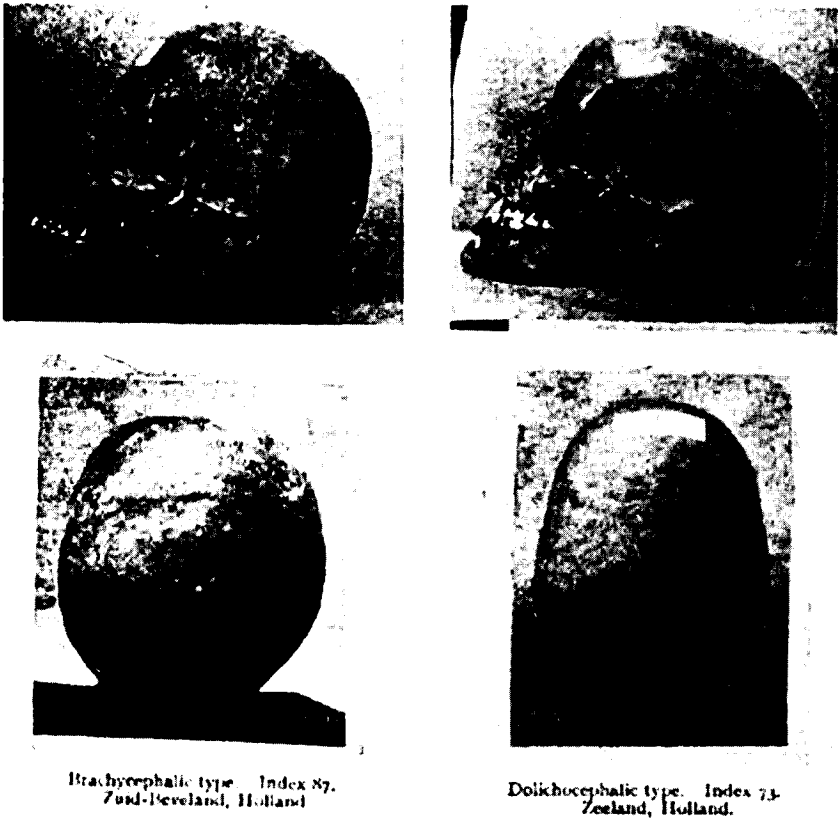Dolichocephalic type.   Index 73.
Zeeland, Holland.

Figure 4. William Z. Ripley's Cephalic Index, 1899, from Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York, 1899), 38.

impoverished new millions appeared at American ports of entry, the Irish were, in the words of a pioneering historian, "becoming white."[33]

The early-twentieth-century furor over immigration spoke in racial terms without producing definitive racial criteria. Like all racial taxonomy, before and since, the racial classification of immigrants created a good deal of confusion, prompting governmental action. In 1911 the United States Immigration Commission sought to clear matters up with the publication of its *Dictionary of Races or Peoples*. This work presents a table of "races or peoples," in which six categories of authorities, including the prestigious William Z. Ripley, list the Irish (or at least an unspecified "part" of them) within the category "Teutonic." (The other Irish "part" was not accounted for.) (See Figure 7.)

[33] Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York, 1995), 3.

Figure 5. "The Three European Racial Types," 1899, from Ripley, *Races of Europe*, facing p. 120.
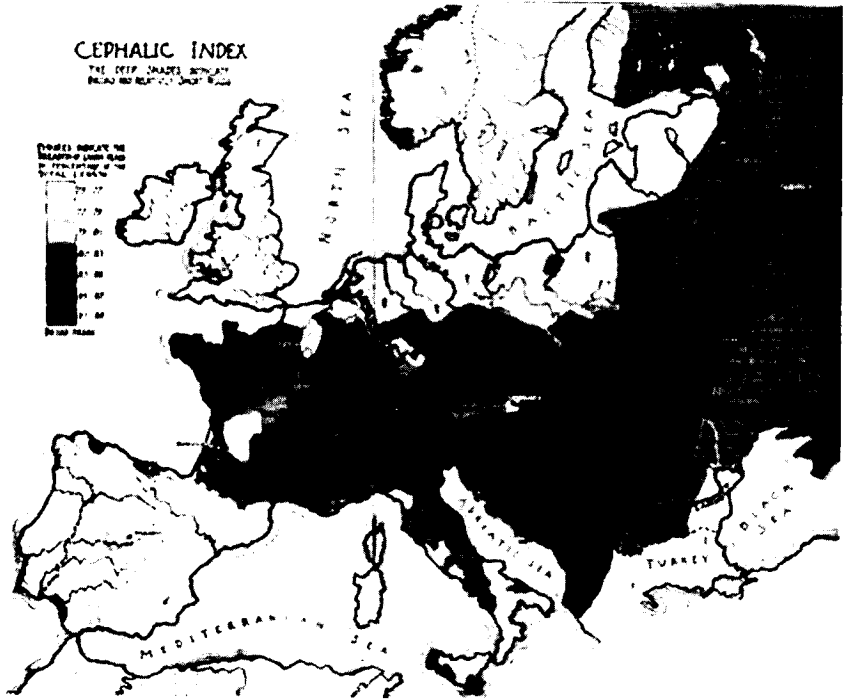
Figure 6. Ripley's Map of Cephalic Indexes in Europe, 1899, from Ripley, *Races of Europe*, facing p. 53.

Government-certified science corroborated what eugenicists and scholars were conceding: the Irish, from an English-speaking country in northern Europe, had become almost fully Teutonic and, thereby, almost fully American. Although the English, Scandinavians, Germans (northern part), Dutch, and Flemish counted as Teutonic both by group and by Ripley-race, the Irish (part) remained Celtic by group, though Teutonic by Ripley-race. This was good enough, as the Russians, Poles, Czechs, and other eastern and southern Europeans appeared as "Slavonic" and variously as Mediterranean and Alpine.[34]

The task of categorizing Jews according to race had long frustrated scholars. William Z. Ripley, for instance, said Jews were not a race but rather a group related biologically to non-Jews wherever they lived.[35] This was not a new position, but, as usual, it disappeared in simplified

[34] United States Immigration Commission, *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* (Washington, D.C., 1911), 5.

[35] Ripley, *Races of Europe*, 397–400.

COMPARATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF IMMIGRANT RACES OR PEOPLES.

Based on Brinton (cf. Keane).			People.	Ripley's races, with other corresponding terms.
Race.	Stock.	Group.		
Caucasian..	Aryan.....	Teutonic....	Scandinavian: Danish.......... Norwegian...... Swedish.......... German (N. part). Dutch........... English (part).... Flemish........	I. TEUTONIC. H. Europæus (Lapouge). Nordic (Deniker). Dolicho-leptorhine (Kohlmann). Germanic (English writers). Rothergräber (German writers). Kymric (French writers).
		Lettic.......	Lithuanian......	
		Celtic.......	Scotch (part)... Irish (part).......... Welsh...........	Part Alpine.
		Slavonic....	Russian........... Polish........... Czech: Bohemian........ Moravian........ Servian........... Croatian......... Montenegrin.... Slovak........ Slovenian........ Ruthenian........ Dalmatian........ Herzegovinian.... Bosnian....	II. ALPINE (OR CELTIC). H. Alpinus (Lapouge). Occidental (Deniker). Disentis (German writers). Celto-Slavic (French writers). Lappanoid (Pruner-Bey). Sarmatian (von Hölder). Arvernian (Beddoe).
		Illyric....... Armenic.....	Albanian.... Armenian........	
		Italic........	French........ Italian (part)..... Roumanian........ Spanish......... Spanish-American..... Mexican, etc........ Portuguese...........	Part Alpine. Part Mediterranean. III. MEDITERRANEAN. H. Meridionalis (Lapouge). Atlanto-Mediterranean and Ibero-Insular (Deniker). Iberian (English writers). Ligurian (Italian writers). Part Mediterranean. Part Teutonic.
		Hellenic.....	Greek...........	
		Iranic.......	Hindu........... Gypsy.............	
		Arabic.....	Arabian...........	Part Mediterranean.
	Semitic...	Chaldaic....	Hebrew............ Syrian............	
	Caucasic.. Euskaric..		Caucasus peoples...... Basque............	Doubtful.
Mongolian.	Sibiric....	Finnic......	Finnish............ Lappish............. Magyar........... Bulgarian (part)..	
		Tataric......	Turkish, Cossack, etc.	
		Japanese....	Japanese, Korean...	
		Mongolic....	Kalmuk...........	
	Sinitic....	Chinese.....	Chinese............ East Indian (part, i. e., Indo-Chinese). Pacific Islander (part). East Indian (part)....	
Malay......				
Ethiopian..			Negro.............	
American (Indian).			American Indian......	

Figure 7. "Comparative Classification of Immigrant Races or Peoples," from United States Immigration Commission, *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* (Washington, D.C., 1911), 5.

taxonomies. The *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* slots Jews racially as Semitic, Chaldaic, and "Part Mediterranean." (See Figure 8.) This seemed sufficiently scientific at the time.

The draft during the First World War offered American psychologists a bountiful opportunity for quantifying their new interest in comparative intelligence. By the time the project of testing the intelligence of U.S. Army draftees closed down in January 1919, tests of some 1,750,000 men had generated a huge body of data. The resulting mass of statistical data permitted the ranking of human groups by IQ. The official government report ran to almost nine hundred pages. But the popularization (published by Princeton University Press) by a bright young Princeton professor, Carl Campbell Brigham, made the tests' results accessible through readable text, graphs, and tables, and it correlated immigration, IQ, and race.[36]

This well-received and widely read presentation of the army IQ test results shows a wide array of white men, classified and ranked by mental ability. The bar graph in Figure 9 compares the scores of each racial and national group, with A the highest score, C average, and E the lowest score. Brigham's categories respect the traditional American black-white dichotomy: "Negro" serves as a portmanteau category for people of mixed—and, presumably, other—races, and white draftees' many races-of-Europe are distributed across nineteen overlapping categories. Asians and Native Americans do not appear. The large number of categories Brigham lists above the undifferentiated "Negro Draft" captures educated Americans' thinking about white race in the first quarter of the twentieth century: the category of Negro at the bottom, Asians and Indians invisible, but an array of different kinds of white people.

The 1920s marked the high point of the belief in several European races and in the feasibility of ranking them according to their attractiveness. Although the 1920s and early 1930s witnessed much race talk and bigotry in the United States, Nazis, anthropologists, and the children of immigrants subsequently convinced Americans of the existence of only one white race.

Today's concept of one white race translates races into "ethnicities"—or into an unnamed but longheaded Anglo-Saxon Americanness, as displayed in Ralph Lauren and Abercrombie & Fitch

[36] Robert M. Yerkes, *Psychological Examining in the United States Army* (Washington, D.C., 1921); Carl C. Brigham, *A Study of American Intelligence* (Princeton, 1923).

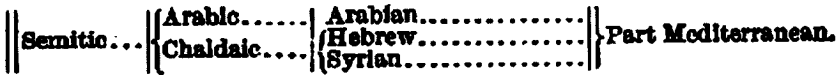| Semitic ... | { Arabic...... Chaldaic.... | { Arabian............... { Hebrew............... { Syrian............... | } Part Mediterranean. |

Figure 8. Detail of "Comparative Classification of Immigrant Races or Peoples," from United States Immigration Commission, *Dictionary of Races or Peoples*, 5.

advertisements. The change from white race*s* to one white race occurred in the mid-twentieth century, with scholars on one side and German Nazis on the other.

Even before the Nazis came to power in Germany and intensified the abuse of Jews, anthropologists had begun explaining the idea of one white race. At their head stood the so-called father of American anthropology, the Columbia University professor Franz Boas (1858–1942). Boas's fundamental message was antiracist. He set far more store in the importance of culture over race in the forging of human difference. Nonetheless, he continued to believe in the existence of racial difference. Although Boas recognized the importance of head shape (Ripley's famous cephalic index) into the 1940s, he early disagreed with Ripley's idea of three European races. "To be sure," Boas conceded in the 1930s, "Negroes and East Asiatics are fundamentally different from Europeans." But was it possible to distinguish one group from another racially? "Not in Europe." While anti-Semitism was turning nasty in Germany, Boas, whose own background was Jewish, disputed the racialization of Jews: "The Jews of Europe are in their essential traits, Europeans."[37]

The hateful policies of the Nazi racial state appalled many Americans and motivated anthropologists to disprove Nazi theories of racial difference and hierarchy. Boas died early in the Second World War, by which time his students, who had become the leading anthropologists in the United States, were disputing the importance of race. They downplayed race and emphasized culture, all the while speaking of one white race. Ruth Benedict (1887–1948), one of Boas's best-known students, explained the correct understanding of race to both lay and scholarly audiences. Benedict made it clear that "Aryans, Jews, Italians are *not* races." The real races had scientific names: "the Caucasian race," "the Mongoloid race," "the Negroid race." Culture meant habits

[37] Franz Boas, "Race Prejudice from the Scientist's Angle" (1937), in Boas, *Race and Democratic Society* (New York, 1945), 10 (first and second quotations); Boas, "Are the Jews a Race?" (1923), *ibid.*, 40 (third quotation); Boas, "Racial Purity" (1942), *ibid.*, 31; Boas, "The American People" (1909), *ibid.*, 92.
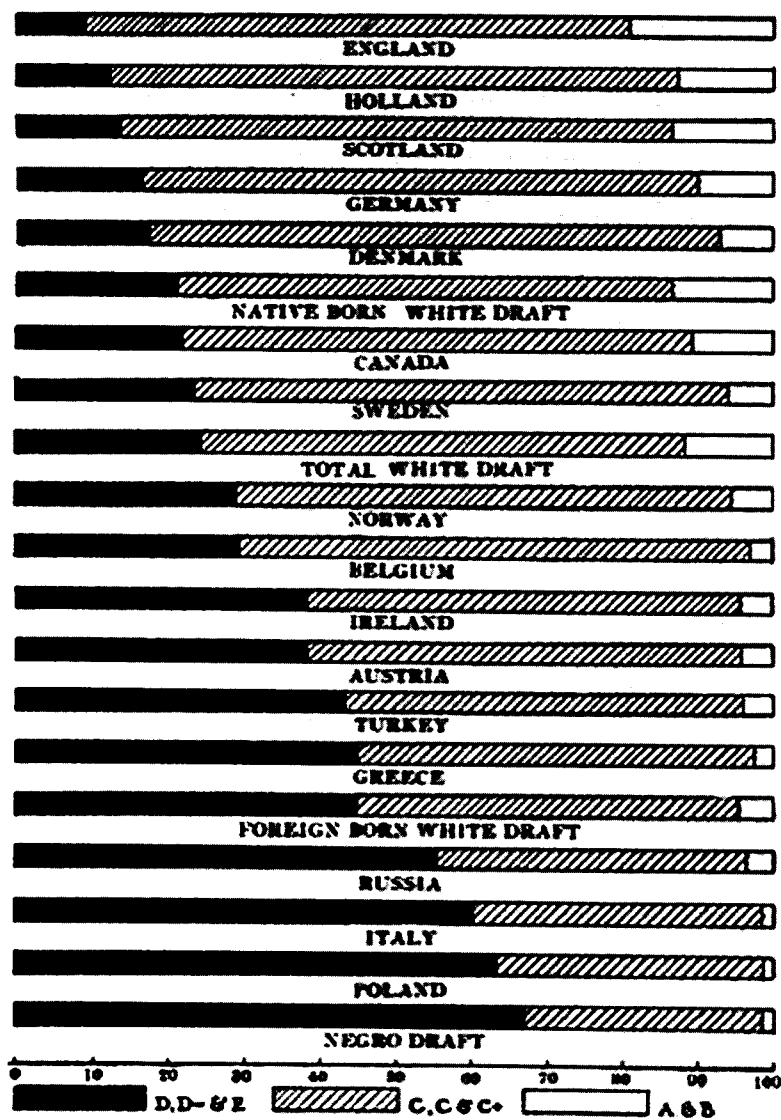
Figure 9. IQ Scores of Army Draftees, from Carl C. Brigham, *A Study of American Intelligence* (Princeton, 1923), 146.

of living, most notably language, and the mores of the various national communities.[38]

[38] Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, "The Races of Mankind" (1943), in Ruth Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics* (rev. ed.; New York, 1947), 177.

In the 1940s and 1950s, American sociology explained that the process of "assimilation" was turning the children and grandchildren of immigrants into Americans. Boas, Benedict, and sophisticated Americans concluded that white people differ among themselves according to their various cultures but that they differ from "the Mongoloid race" and "the Negroid race" according to their race.

One of the most recognizable examples of the one-white-race version of American whiteness comes from the studio of an American cultural icon: Walt Disney (1901–1966). The Disney studio broadcast *The Mickey Mouse Club* from 1955 to 1959, with the program often rebroadcast and revived—not very successfully—in the 1970s. The all-American Mouseketeers began every program by introducing themselves, a roll call of "The American." Figure 10 shows the Mouseketeers on one of their frequent public relations outings to publicize not only their show but also Disney's imagined American small town plus adventure park, Disneyland.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the term *ethnicity* began replacing the concept of culture in the scholarly literature on white people. The distinction between race and ethnicity remained unclear, however. In 1970 a leading sociologist confessed, "It is true that systems of race and systems of ethnic relations have much in common."[39] To this day scholars and laypeople find it difficult to tell race and ethnicity apart. Even the Oxford English Dictionary Online lists a second meaning for *ethnic* like this: "Pertaining to race; peculiar to a race or nation; ethnological." Originating in the biracial South, the civil rights revolution spoke simply of black and white.[40] Black Power went even further.

According to sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "The black movement *redefined the meaning of racial identity*, and consequently of race *itself*, in American society."[41] If black people could proclaim themselves black and proud, white people realized they could, too, but not without facing an old American tradition of white pride. Ku Klux Klansmen and white nationalists having already commandeered the label *white*, proud Americans reached instead for "ethnic" identities. Sociologists call the white ethnicity of the 1970s

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[39] Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Ethnicity: Essays in Comparative Sociology* (New York, 1970), 10. Van den Berghe's explanation further confuses readers seeking clarification: "What makes a society multiracial is not the presence of physical differences between groups, but the attribution of social significance to such physical differences as may exist." *Ibid.*

[40] See Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven, 1990); and Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley, 1990).

[41] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (1986; 2nd ed., New York, 1994), 99.

Figure 10. The Disney Mouseketeers, October 20, 1956. Courtesy of Collection 1429 Los Angeles Times Collection, Box 287, Neg. #101369, Picture of Disney Mouseketeers in Courtroom of Judge Harold Schweitzer, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

and 1980s "symbolic ethnicity," because it remains a leisure activity, an affair of tee shirts, tourism, and parades. White ethnicity plays useful roles through distancing white ethnics from the American history of slavery and segregation and offering more interesting versions of whiteness than "vanilla" or "white-bread" whiteness.[42]

Politics encouraged the use of the term *white ethnics* in the 1980s, with the disintegration of the New Deal coalition, the working-class Democratic voting bloc forged during the Great Depression. The descendants of the people whom Carl Brigham placed next to black people were now setting themselves apart from black Americans, but distinguishing themselves from the racists proclaiming themselves proud to be "white." This dual strategy both unifies and splinters American whiteness.

[42] See Waters, *Ethnic Options*, 90–93. Herbert Gans coined the phrase "symbolic ethnicity" in his article titled "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2 (January 1979), 1–20. In "Racial Fairy Tales," Micaela di Leonardo describes the image of white ethnics as "warmer, more family- and community-oriented than WASPs but not 'disorganized' and 'savage' like blacks . . . , closer to the earth, less 'plastic' and 'uptight' than WASPs." *Nation*, December 9, 1991, pp. 752–54 (quotation on p. 752).

One of the most infamous books of the 1990s prided itself on its unsentimental statement of the facts. The widely recognized aura of scientific fact around Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (1994) makes it a handy example of the racial taxonomy of its time. Echoing the tone and methodology of the army IQ tests and Carl Brigham's interpretation of the menace in their meaning, Herrnstein and Murray correlate race and intelligence. In their mid-1990s tables, Brigham's twenty categories become four: white, black, Asian, and Latino. Unitary white identity appears unquestioned.[43]

Racial taxonomy in the 1990s was not so simple, however. On the one hand, *The Bell Curve* acknowledges the problems inherent in talking about races. On the other hand, these problems do not prevent the authors' speaking of races: "We frequently use the word *ethnic* rather than *race*," they say, "because race is such a difficult concept to employ in the American context." Elsewhere the authors speak of "whites, East Asians, and blacks" as "the three major racial-ethnic groupings." Even *The Bell Curve*'s list of tables tells a simpler story, one in which *white*, by itself and used frequently, emerges as a meaningful category of race. Jews' high IQ scores rate part of a paragraph, but otherwise white ethnics are not to be found.[44]

Around the same time that *The Bell Curve* reinscribed intelligence as racial, white people began to feel marked by race, and the white race was attracting attention in the academy. Whiteness was no longer the invisible norm.[45] David R. Roediger published *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* in 1991, and Noel Ignatiev published *How the Irish Became White* in 1995.[46] These two books laid the groundwork for a field that continues to flourish. Since their publication more than a decade ago, the scholarly orthodoxy on whiteness envisions it less and less as a stable, unitary identity. Definitions of whiteness must now be "dynamic and context-specific," taking into account variations reaching far beyond ethnicity.[47] Class, region, demographic context, and sexual orientation now

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[43] Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York, 1994).

[44] *Ibid.*, xvii, 271 (first and second quotations), 275 (third and fourth quotations).

[45] See Troy Duster, "The 'Morphing' Properties of Whiteness," in Birgit Brander Rasmussen et al., eds., *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham, 2001), 129.

[46] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, 1991).

[47] Birgit Brander Rasmussen et al., "Introduction," in Rasmussen et al., eds., *Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, 7.

all modify the scholarly concept of whiteness. Privilege emerges as a crucial facet of white race, but *whiteness* alone no longer suffices as a meaningful analytic term.

With the deconstruction of whiteness, the porous nature of its boundaries emerges more clearly, and taxonomic certainty recedes. People called biracial and multiracial are newly visible in scholarship, even though Americans have been having sex indiscriminately for over four centuries. To confuse matters further, sociologists have discovered that multiracial people change their identities according to context. Other people's perceptions influence how their identity gets phrased.[48] Come to think of it, other people's perceptions influence how anyone's identity gets phrased.

The U.S. census of 2000 reflects the increased recognition of bi- and multiracial identities. For the first time, respondents could describe themselves as belonging to one or more of fifteen "racial" identities. As occurred so often in the past, the list of races included nationalities. (See Figure 11.)

Was Marie white? In light of the changing ways Americans have conceived of white identity, answering my question simply according to the mores prevailing in the United States in 1835 becomes both too easy and too lazy. After all, we routinely read current conceptions of race backward, assuming that one-white-race was always considered scientific truth. If question six of the 2000 census illuminates the ways white race may be construed in the United States, the answer to my question today is not the same as in 1835. Legal maneuvering in the 1980s illustrates the continuing evolution of white race definition.

In the late 1970s Susie Guillory Phipps of Louisiana had her application for a passport denied because her stated racial designation, "white," did not match that of her birth certificate, "colored." A white woman in appearance and experience—she said she had twice married white men—Phipps sought to change her racial classification to accord with the way she lived her life. She sued the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records, but lost. According to existing Louisiana law, Phipps was colored by dint of her descent from an eighteenth-century planter and a woman of African descent. The law, passed in 1970, declared anyone with more than 1/32 black blood a colored person.[49]

[48] David L. Brunsma and Kerry Ann Rockquemore, "The New Color Complex: Appearances and Biracial Identity," *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 1 (July 2001), 225–46, esp. pp. 225–26, 239–44.

[49] Calvin Trillin, "Black or White," *New Yorker*, April 14, 1986, pp. 62–78. The previous definition of "any discernible trace" had proved unwieldy in administrative application.

Figure 11. Question Six, 2000 U.S. Census, from U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, *Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses from 1790 to 2000* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 100.

The Phipps case exactly parallels the situation of Marie Nelson: in Louisiana location and degree of descent. As though to uphold Marie's identity as well, the Louisiana court ruled against Phipps, who remained colored. Provisionally. The Louisiana state legislature repealed the law in July 1983. Phipps might by now be white officially, but in 1985 the Louisiana appellate court ruled she had not presented

sufficient proof of her race to change her own designation. However, the birth certificates of Louisianans born after 1980 do not specify race.[50]

We are not at all surprised to learn that definitions of race—understood as applying to people considered nonwhite—continue to change, for we understand the roles of power and politics in defining, say, blackness. We would do well to carry that sophistication over to understandings of whiteness and see that white race, like its black partner in meaning, also changes with historical circumstance.

[50] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 53, 180; Frances Frank Marcus, "Louisiana Repeals Black Blood Law," New York *Times*, July 6, 1983, A10; Associated Press, "Around the Nation: Louisiana Court Rejects Change in Racial Status," *ibid.*, October 19, 1985, section 1, p. 6; Trillin, "Black or White."