

**21A.240**  
**Race and Science**  
**Spring 2004 MIT**

**PART 1:**  
**THE ALCHEMY OF RACE: MAKING AND UNMAKING SCIENTIFIC RACISM**  
**Lecture 5. March 4**

Summary of so far : Close weave between theories of race and ideas about proper or natural SEX/GENDER roles and behaviors. We've seen this all the way from early pre-scientific ideas about race through Darwin on sexual selection up to eugenics.

Concerns with measuring the relative worth of races — first through ranking on the great chain of being, then through craniometry, then through an assessment of their evolutionary "fitness."

We've looked at changing SUBSTANCES of race.

Last time, we looked at the history of eugenics in the United States and in Britain, which showed us how ideas about "race" were articulated to ideas about NATION and CLASS. And today, I want us to look at two histories PARALLEL to eugenics. These are:

1. history of race in early American anthropology and sociology (Baker, Boas) and
2. histories of immigration, citizenship law (Jacobson)

You'll have noticed from the Jacobson readings on American nativism, and the American making of the term "Caucasian" as a scientific synonym for white, anthropological visions and revisions of race take place in political *context* of American debates about IMMIGRATION and CITIZENSHIP and more particularly about IMMIGRATION and CITIZENSHIP LAW

So, American anthropology comes into existence amidst anxieties and debates about racial categories and the political and legal debates about immigration.

I want you to see these two histories as contexts for one another — looking at how racial categories created in public debate about immigration, for example, affected how anthropology took on the categories AND looking at how public discourse about immigration and citizenship drew from, ignored, or reshaped anthropological categories.

In thinking about these two histories as mutually constitutive CONTEXTS, It's useful to reflect on what W.E.B. Du Bois said about RACE: "perhaps it is wrong to speak of race at all as a concept, rather than as a group of contradictory forces, facts and tendencies" (Baker 1997: p. 112). This as a call to understand "race" not simply as an idea, but as a messy part of everyday life.

So, If our past two classes have been trying to get you to think about how scientific articulations of race also have simultaneously spoken in the registers of gender,

class, nation, and state, today, I want you to think about the relation between SCIENCE, RACE, AND LAW.

### **Skin Color, Bodily Form: Laws of Science and Laws of the Land in the Context of Immigration, Assimilation and Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century American Anthropology**

Jacobson, Matthew Frye. 1998. Race and American Nativism, from Anglo-Saxons and Others, 1840-1924. In *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 68-90.

Stocking, George, Jr. 1994. The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race. *Modernism/Modernity* 1:1: pp. 4-16.

Baker, Lee. 1997. Rethinking Race at the Turn of the Century: W.E.B. Du Bois and Franz Boas. In *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 99-126.

Boas, Franz. 1913. Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants. In *Race, Language and Culture*. New York: The Free Press/Macmillan, 1966, pp. 60-75.

Jacobson, Matthew Frye. 1998. Becoming Caucasian, 1924-1965 & Naturalization and the Courts. In *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 91-109, pp. 223-240.

### **ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY**

Let's start with the Stocking piece:

G. Stanley Hall, president of Clark University, remarking on a paper he heard in 1895 on "The Scotch-Irish in America"

made it clear that much more was involved in the "commingling of bloods" than simply physical characteristics. "The combination of racial bloods is not a mere matter of biology or physiology...because physical inheritance does not include mere physical mingling of the bloods, but [also] that subtle atmosphere of associations, of home traditions, of family recollections and ideals and aims, that are so inseparable."

"Blood"--and by extension "race"--included numerous elements that we would today call cultural; there was not a clear line between cultural and physical elements or between social and biological heredity

Stocking is showing us how many, different, separate features of human social life are confused, conflated by Hall, mixed together.

Stocking argues that there were four traditions of thinking about human difference that were used

The ETHNOLOGICAL: language, food, custom, etc,

The LAMARCKIAN: inheritance of acquired characteristics, couldn't distinguish between cultural and biological inheritance (before ideas about heredity).  
POLYGENISM: idea that God had created human groups separately  
EVOLUTIONISM: but with idea that some groups are more evolved than others.

It was all of these that **FRANZ BOAS** was interested in demolishing.

How?

1. Separate biology from culture.
2. Use Darwinian theory to refute Lamarck,
3. Argue for the unity of humanity
4. Argue that evolution does not imply ranking (that is an old great chain of being idea) and that cultures must be studied on their own terms.

Let's go back to Hall's idea about

"The combination of racial bloods is not a mere matter of biology or physiology...because physical inheritance does not include mere physical mingling of the bloods, but [also] that subtle atmosphere of associations, of home traditions, of family recollections and ideals and aims, that are so inseparable."

Boas would SEPARATE these strands

RACE, LANGUAGE, and CULTURE have *different* histories.

Boas is responsible for defining CULTURE in the way we think about it today. Before Boas, CULTURE meant opera, oil paintings — and only Europeans had it.

But, having separated CULTURE from BIOLOGY, what did this make RACE for BOAS? See his 1913 article, in which he demonstrates that children of immigrants to US look different from their parents. (an intervention in immigration debates)

What did RACE become for BOAS? *Plastic*

What's really tricky here is that RACE *still* exists for BOAS

-MOVEOVER, RACE IS always negative for BOAS.

This means that he's still trapped in the game — that there is *something* there in biology; he's still using the categories of his day (see Baker 119)

**W.E.B. DU BOIS** had a different approach. What was it?

"perhaps it is wrong to speak of race at all as a concept, rather than as a group of contradictory forces, facts and tendencies" (Baker 1997: p. 112).

Race is fully sociological; invented in the context of power and inequality. (p. 111).

And THIS is where the context of IMMIGRATION LAW in the UNITED STATES during this period comes in.

## **IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION**

The concept of race forged and re-forged in the context of who could count as a citizen capable of rational self-government and immigration debates.

1840-1924, question of who could be a Citizen of the US depended upon whether people were considered capable of self-government, organized around what we would now call regional/national identities (Germanic, Mediterranean, Hebrew, Irish, Italian, etc.) but which back then were *racialized* identities.

To “naturalize” — and note the word! Getting citizenship AS IF being born in US (US grants citizenship on birth on land — not all nations do this; e.g. Germany):

1790 “any alien being a free white person”

1870 added “aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent”

1882: Chinese Exclusion Act, explicitly excluded Chinese, (who had been coming from Canton because of the Gold Rush in California) lasts until 1943 [about when Japanese internment starts!])

Celts, Hebrews, Italians becoming less white in terms of who should appear on shore, but more white in terms of who could be citizens (p. 75).

Immigration Restriction League 1893 (p. 77).

anti-miscegenation laws (some state laws on books until 1967, 1948 in CA)

some of these laws specified that a US citizen woman, if she married an alien ineligible for citizenship would lose her citizenship (only other thing you lose citizenship for is TREASON)

treated women as property of a “race”; white women property of white men.

of a piece with anti-immigration laws, regulating “reproduction” of the nation and its favored constituents.

also kept “races” distinct by forcing immigrant groups into their own communities, thereby reproducing communities of people who were judged according to those categories.

Davenport: *nation as race* at Cold Spring Harbor

1907 gentlemen’s agreement: stopped immigration of Japanese people to US.

1911 Dillingham Commission Report on *Races and Peoples*; used Blumenbach's 5 races, but also recognized "45 races among immigrants coming to the US" (p. 78). (p. 79: quote of use in analyzing Boas 1913!!! [names the very categories he's using]).

Dillingham commission saw immigrants as parents of future Americans (since citizenship is conferred by birth!), and so inquired into their fitness to be included in national germ plasm (eugenic concern) (pp. 82-83).

1924: Johnson Act: 2% quotas for immigrants based on 1890 census.

After 1924, a shift from ranking specific "races" like "Mediterranean" or "Irish" to the beginning of the consolidation of a "Caucasian" racial formation; all these types BECOME Caucasian.

"Caucasian" supposedly a more "scientific" term than "white" (more than skin-deep) [Jacobson p. 94]

Race politics get reorganized around black-white

"as scientists asserted over and over that "Aryans," "Jews," "Italians," "Nordics," and the like were not races, their myriad assertions themselves all buttressed an edifice founded upon three grand divisions of mankind— 'Caucasian,' 'Mongoloid', and 'Negroid' — whose differences by implication *were* racial" (Jacobson p. 103)

"Races of Mankind" exhibit 1943: nationalities are not races, the Jews are not a race, etc. "what is an American?" EXHIBIT WAS A LESSON IN CIVICS.

#### *Naturalization and the Courts*

Why is whiteness so important, legally?

it's about assignation of property rights

whiteness AS property (Lockean property in self, and right to own property)

legal disputes: "Hey, I'm white!"

"Between the 1870s and the 1920s the court generated their own epistemology of race that drew from scientific doctrine, from popular understanding, from historical reasoning, from "common-sense ideas, from geography, from precedent" (p. 226 quote)

*Ah Yup* 1878 applied to be white: judge said that he was Mongolian and couldn't be Caucasian

*Halladjian* 1909 Armenians judged white because they were "Caucasian" even if not "European" but their inclusion was still based on the "fact" they were lighter than many Europeans — like the Portuguese — and also that white meant anyone who wasn't African

Let's take a look in depth at two famous court cases in which people sought to be classified as "white/Caucasian" in order to "naturalize" as citizens. These demonstrate the slide between Aristotelian and Prototypical

classification employed by those in power to consolidate social hierarchy (see discussion in Jacobson):

*Ozawa* (1922): "you may be white, but you are not Caucasian" science

*Thind* (1923): "you may be Caucasian, but you are not white" common-sense

"'Caucasian' did accomplish something that the more casual notion of whiteness could not: it brought the full authority of science to bear on white identity." (p. 94).