

EMBODYING RACE:
GENDER, SEX, AND THE SCIENCES OF DIFFERENCE, 1830-1934

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in History

written under the direction of

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[May, 2008]

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This project uses the body as a site to examine the complex relationship between science, culture, and politics in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States, and the ways in which gender and sex can be used to conceptualize other categories of difference, such as race and sexuality. Scientists during this period naturalized racial difference and socio-political exclusion by insisting that the bodies of racial minorities were not fully male or female at a time when power, citizenship, property, and protection were conferred according to sex. My dissertation makes other important interventions in the existing scholarship on nineteenth-century racial and scientific thought, as well as American race relations. Rather than treating ethnology as static, I reveal significant change over time in scientific discourse on race with regard to gender and sex. Scientists' shifting uses of sex and gender to denote racial difference corresponded to larger shifts in American politics and culture, including Emancipation and the gendered questions of citizenship it raised, the rise of evolutionary theory, and turn-of-the-century fears about miscegenation, immigration, homosexuality, and "race suicide." This discourse was not one-sided or monolithic, however. Accordingly, I also explore tensions within and challenges to white racist science. Moreover, I demonstrate that scientific discourse

was not divorced from the lives of real people; it had a tangible impact on how living human bodies were treated. Finally, while recent scholarship has identified important parallels between racial and sexual science, my work reveals that ethnology and sexology not only shared similar cultural politics in America, they were literally populated by the same prominent scientists.

While at its core an intellectual history of scientific thought on race and gender, this dissertation is not concerned only with ideas and discourse, but how such ideas were received and how they shaped race relations. Thus, my work utilizes a variety of sources—including scientific and medical texts, newspaper articles, private correspondence, political writing, and visual materials such as political cartoons and campaign posters—to interrogate scientists' engagement with sociopolitical issues as well as the incursion of scientific thought into political culture.

Acknowledgements

This project has received generous support from several sources at Rutgers. Graduate fellowships from the Department of History provided much needed time for research early on in the project and an Excellence Fellowship from the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research facilitated its completion. The Institute for Research on Women also provided monetary support, but far more importantly, participation in its year long seminar on “Gender, Health, and Bodies,” led by Beth Hutchison and Nancy Hewitt, offered the opportunity for interdisciplinary exchange of the best kind. My work and my sanity greatly benefited from the feedback I received from such a smart, friendly group of scholars. In addition, since its inception, the Center for Race and Ethnicity has been a second home to me and our “in-house” research group has proven a most supportive environment in which to write and revise. Over the last two years, the members of the group have offered insightful commentary and practical advice on several chapters; I extend my thanks to Rebecca Scales, Richard Mizelle, Nadia Brown, Anantha Sudhakar, Jeffrey Dowd, Dora Vargha, Director Keith Wailoo, and Associate Director Mia Bay.

I have had the pleasure of conducting research in a number of excellent libraries and archives along the way, including the American Philosophical Society, Rutgers University Special Collections, the Walter Reed Army Medical Museum, the National Library of Medicine, and the New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division. The College of Physicians of Philadelphia Historical Library in particular has been a treasure trove of resources, with much help from Edward Morman, Lisa Gensel, and Richard Fraser. And last but certainly not least, the Rutgers library staff have been

enormously helpful, particularly the interlibrary loan department; it is quite clear to me that there is no source—no matter how obscure—they cannot procure and with frightening speed.

Feedback from a number of sources has shaped—and improved—this dissertation. Deborah Gray White, Temma Kaplan, and Bonnie Smith have commented on my work at critical early stages and have also offered encouragement and sage advice on many occasions. Krystal Frazier, Pamela Epstein, Emily Westkaemper, Jacqueline Castledine, Emily Sloat Shaw, Janine Everett, and Candace GrandPre have been frequent and enthusiastic readers and much-valued friends. Jessica Restaino, my constant cheerleader, writing partner, and rock steady friend, has read drafts of every chapter—sometimes more than once, bless her heart. She has not only improved my prose, she has made graduate school easier in innumerable ways, including an always-available couch and warm blanket. Undergraduate mentors and now dear friends, Maria Mitchell, Padmini Mongia, and Renée Sentilles, have continued to offer advice and good cheer at every turn. I never would have chosen to be an academic without them. And I would not have had the opportunity to do so without the unflagging encouragement of my former co-workers in the grants office of the School District of Philadelphia, particularly Leonard Rossio and my boss Marcia Schulman; then, as now, I think of them more as family.

My dissertation committee has been an unmatched source of intellectual and professional support. Nancy Hewitt has provided encouragement and wisdom at every stage; it is not difficult to see why no dissertation committee at Rutgers seems to be complete without her on it. Always encouraging me to find the “story” in my project,

Ann Fabian has the rare talent of giving constructive criticism that left me more excited about my project than before; her enthusiasm is that infectious. Keith Wailoo has made me think of science and medicine in entirely new ways, while also providing some of the best practical advice around on navigating the Academy. With spot-on feedback, Marc Stein has been an incredibly generous, attentive, and cheerful outside reader. My advisor, Mia Bay, has read multiple versions of every chapter with patience, keen insight, and a critical eye. She has continuously pushed me to think big and write simply; my work is infinitely better for her efforts. Perhaps less tangible but no less important, she has always made me laugh as well as think. That I have so thoroughly enjoyed graduate school, in addition to learning more than I ever thought possible, is largely to her credit.

My family has supported me and my work in too many ways to list, not the least of which were frequent queries of “Aren’t you done yet?” They cheered me on when I left a “good job” for the less lucrative if more intellectually rewarding world of academia, even when they weren’t clear on why. Always interested in what I’m working on, my intrepid grandfather, Heinz, has even read portions of this dissertation at various stages and lived to tell the tale. A professor at heart if not in title, I know he shares this journey with me. My parents, Marilyn and Donald, always reminded me to take time out for rest and fun—and intervened heroically whenever I didn’t follow their advice. Their boundless love and constant encouragement have sustained me throughout. Finally, I would not be a very astute gender historian if I failed to notice that my grandmothers, Veronica and Verdun, both sharp and enthusiastic students in their youth, never had the opportunity to pursue education to this level. I dedicate this dissertation to them.

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Introduction

The birth of the United States represented a pivotal and complex moment in race-making. The language of equality, protection from tyranny, and the “rights of man” used in American Revolutionary rhetoric seemed to conflict with the reality of a slave society—an incongruity that eighteenth century African Americans certainly noted. However, many historians have argued that the Founding Fathers actually intended their vision of a democratic society to apply only to white, propertied men. Most notably, Thomas Jefferson, who wrote so eloquently about the ideals of democracy in the Declaration of Independence, was himself a slave owner and yet publicly expressed deep ambivalence over slavery. Despite conflicted sentiments over the institution, Jefferson proposed in his widely read text, Notes on the State of Virginia, first published in the early 1780s, that blacks were most likely naturally and irreconcilably inferior. An early father of scientific racism, Jefferson’s Notes applied the principles of animal husbandry to a lengthy and strange discussion of racial mixture and expressed clear distaste for black physiognomy, which he deemed an “eternal monotony” and an “immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race.”¹

A virtual microcosm of the racial tropes and themes that later characterized ethnology, Jefferson made a number of claims in Notes about black people specifically and about racial difference more generally that would continue to echo in scientific writing on race well into the twentieth century. Notably, gender played a key role in Jefferson’s assessment of racial difference and hierarchy. “A black, after hard labour

¹ Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, reprinted in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., Thomas Jefferson: Writings (New York: Library of America), 264-265.

through the day, will be induced by the slightest amusements to sit up till midnight, or later, though knowing he must be out with the first dawn of the morning. They are at least as brave [as white men], and more adventuresome. But this may perhaps proceed from a want of forethought..." he wrote. His argument here foreshadowed paternalistic defenses of slavery by antebellum scientists; black men were suited to hard labor, but impetuous and incapable of acting in their own best interests. Even areas in which they seemed to compare favorably with white men—"they are at least as brave, and more adventuresome"—instead underscored racial difference and gender deviance. Bravery in white men was simply that, while apparent bravery in black men stemmed from their recklessness, impugning their manhood rather than recommending it. Moreover, Jefferson suggested that black men "are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation."² Where white men were rational and capable of the loft emotion of love, black men were passionate and driven by lust. This characterization too placed black men outside of white gender norms, but it also connected the black race with hypersexuality, a trope that resonated in racial science into the twentieth century, with all too tangible results.

Most important among his many claims about race though was that racial differences were not cultural, but rather natural and rooted in the body itself. It was this belief that drove racial science and remained a central tenet in the field even as other concerns, debates, and frameworks in the field changed over time. Though Jefferson expressed some uncertainty as to exactly from where in the body race sprung, he was an

² Jefferson, 265.

early advocate of the idea that it was both bodily and pervasive. He questioned whether color, the most immediately obvious difference between the races, was located in the “reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin,” “in the scarf-skin itself,” or “proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion.” But ultimately, “the difference is fixed in nature, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us.”³

Jefferson also assumed racial difference held tremendous importance. “This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people,” he maintained. Moreover, he found the black and white races so different that he suggested that they might be entirely different species. Near the end of his discussion of slavery and race in Notes, Jefferson offers a call to arms of sorts for further study into racial difference: “It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications. Will not a lover of natural history then, one who views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed them?”⁴ Scientists began to take up Jefferson’s call shortly thereafter and more widely still in the nineteenth century.

But it is also important to note that Jefferson himself was writing at a critical moment in the biological and natural sciences. The eighteenth century was the Age of Enlightenment, the Age of Reason. Science gained a new place of prominence and respect in Europe and North America, with particular emphasis on understanding the

³ Jefferson, 264.

natural world and, in the wake of Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus' taxonomy system, classifying it as well. As Londa Schiebinger demonstrates in Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science, gender profoundly shaped how scientists viewed and understood that natural world. Plants took on gendered human characteristics in botany texts that read like romantic novels, for example. Human beings, of course, were a part of the natural world and scientists were also increasingly interested in biological differences between men and women and the implications of anatomy for their place in the social order. Thomas Laqueur's Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud examines an eighteenth-century shift from a one-sex model of sexual difference in medical and cultural discourse, whereby women were viewed as imperfect, underdeveloped men rather than a separate sex, to a two-sex model with women and men as opposite sexes. This shift illustrates his assertion that the body and seemingly immutable anatomy itself is viewed through a cultural lens, that sex, like gender, has been—and continues to be—made. In the one-sex model, gender hierarchy and male dominance were justified through the language of bodily inferiority. Male dominance was later justified through the language of sexual opposition in the two-sex model. However, in both cases, the body and sex difference were interpreted in such a way that they reinforced the existing cultural and political ideology about gender roles in society. In other words, the sexed body both reflected and determined the gendered sociopolitical order.

Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia was very much a product of this eighteenth century scientific genealogy, but it also anticipated the direction science

⁴ Jefferson, 270.

would take in the nineteenth century. With a well-established model of using the body to naturalize gender roles and justify social divisions based on sex, scientists began to utilize the logic of “biology is destiny” in regards to race. Echoing the notion of gender differences rooted in biology that could never be legislated away, scientists in Jefferson’s wake moved increasingly away from environmental concepts of race and spoke instead of the immutable and “natural” corporeal differences of African Americans in particular, differences that irrevocably determined their social inferiority. As male/female became increasingly bifurcated and “legitimized” by scientific discourse, so too did the binary of black/white. Grappling with the kinds of questions Jefferson had raised, the field of ethnology—which its adherents defined as the “science of race”—developed gradually over the first decades of the nineteenth century and coalesced in the 1830s with the work of Philadelphia scientist Samuel Morton, who created an elaborate racial taxonomy based on his collection of human skulls.

This is the story, then, of an overlapping group of scientists who shaped ideas about race and human difference in America for over a century. Between the antebellum period and the early twentieth century, these scientists constructed and maintained their own authority by bringing science to bear on the country’s most pressing political issues and social problems. They represented a range of scientific disciplines, regional backgrounds, and political affinities, united by their belief in race as a biological entity. They sought to explain how the races had originated and made predications about where they were headed in the future. Most of all, they naturalized racial hierarchy in the present as transhistorical, rooted in the body, and permanent. The scientists saw their work as socially relevant and indeed, the imprint of it could be seen throughout American

culture in a myriad of ways. Consequently, this is also a story about the mutually informing relationship between racial science, politics, and culture around questions of race and gender. In this project, I am fundamentally concerned with how science functions in society.

Racial science was essentially teleological. Rather than the strictly objective disciplines they often purported to be, nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific endeavors on race took their cue from and reflected existing cultural ideologies and hierarchies. As Laqueur has demonstrated in regards to sex and gender, scientists' expectations about race shaped what they saw in the body. As a result, racial science was rife with claims that today seem contradictory and paradoxical, revealing the nature and extent of scientists' situational logic. For example, ethnologists often claimed that black men had longer arms proportional to white men, which they interpreted as a sign of the former's physical proximity to apes. But at the same time, they insisted that white men's greater amount of body hair was emblematic *not* of their own simian similarities, but of their manliness. Beards could be particularly evocative for racial scientists. New York ethnologist John Van Evrie, for instance, argued that white men had fuller beards than all other races. It is important to note, however, that the beard was not just a marker of racial difference for Van Evrie, but also of manhood. Gender alone, though, as an analytic category, does not fully encompass or explain the implications of this excerpt, or many similar examples of ethnology tracts. For Van Evrie and many of his contemporaries, black men were irrevocably excluded from the category of citizen or political actor not simply because of their allegedly deviant gender performance, presumably a potentially adaptable behavior, but because their very biology excluded them from the sex, "man."

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the corporeal body—specifically, the sexed and sexualized body—was the primary site for examining the moral character and intellectual capacity of those Americans already outside the boundaries of the white, heteronormative nexus of social power and “respectability.”⁵ The body held tremendous meaning for racial and sex difference, meanings that, as I have suggested, constantly shifted according to the specific context and historical moment that led a scientist to “read” it. This project, then, pays close attention to change over time, but it also reveals the persistence of certain ideas about race in American science in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—namely, that racial differences were biological and permanent and social hierarchies a reflection of the natural order. In the antebellum period, scientists looked at bodies across racial lines to answer the “origins question” of whether the races constituted separate species and some looked to naturalize slavery by interpreting black bodies specifically as biologically designed for servitude. In the late nineteenth century, evolutionary theory provided an ideological framework in which bodies were compared and ranked along a scale of human perfection in which white men always occupied the apex. And in the context of locating racial character and destiny on the physical body, the same scientists also began to examine the bodies of homosexuals for proof of their biological deviance. Scientists’ growing concern with homosexuality at the turn of the century was largely a product of their concern with the bodily integrity and sociopolitical status of the white race in the face of enormous social change in America. Similarly, their reconceptualization of homosexuality as a medical pathology rather than a behavior, with supposedly correlated mental and corporeal imperfection, reflected their understandings

⁵ By “sexed body” I mean the body marked as “female” or “male;” by “sexualized, I mean to connote the

of race and gender as biological entities more than a specific scientific breakthrough with regard to sexuality per se. Physical manifestations of existing social power dynamics and cultural hegemonies, these interrelated categories of difference—race, gender, sexuality—were mapped onto the body.

As suggested by my allusion to scientists' intersecting work on race and homosexuality, racial science was a truly interdisciplinary endeavor, with wide-ranging social and political concerns. A myriad of scientific disciplines were brought to bear on questions of race in the nineteenth century, including biology, comparative anatomy, medicine, linguistics, Egyptology, anthropometrics, and, later in the century and into the twentieth, social hygiene, criminology, cultural anthropology, eugenics, and sexology as well. Moreover, as we will see, many individual scientists bridged several of these fields in their professional interests or approaches. Perhaps most notably, America's first sexologists were also the nation's most prominent and prolific scientists of race. What united these diverse scientific endeavors was an abiding interest in human difference. Such differences not only supported social and political hierarchy in America, they demanded it, many white scientists insisted.

These proponents of what I call "the sciences of difference" were never speaking in isolation, however, or without opposition. Quite the contrary, even as scientific racism took shape over the course of the nineteenth century, so too did a vibrant counter-discourse challenging it. African-American ethnologists, for one, disputed scientific claims about black inferiority, argued for their place in the human family, and laid claim a proud history of great civilizations that their white counterparts tried to deny them.

Some white scientists, including Charles Darwin, challenged key tenets of racial science as well or even, on occasion, the whole enterprise as built on tenuous logic or inherently biased. And NAACP leader Walter White insisted that racial science was among the causes of racial violence and strove to dismantle scientific racism as an integral—but often overlooked—part of his anti-lynching work in the 1920s and 1930s. This project, then, seeks to place racial science in a broader conversation in nineteenth and early twentieth century America, to unpack not just its genealogy, but also its reception and social function. At turns embraced and contested, science was at the center of debates over the meanings of race, gender, and sexuality and the nature of power and privilege in the United States.

This dissertation draws on and is in dialogue with a number of historical and scholarly literatures. Part of an emerging scholarship that examines the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality, this project brings together histories that are often presented separately—including U.S. history, the history of race and ethnicity, African American history, cultural and intellectual history, the history of sexuality, women's and gender history, and the history of science and medicine. Though grounded in historical research and methodologies, my work also draws on and has applicability toward the theoretical frameworks of queer theory, critical race theory, and gender studies. It follows in the tradition of analyzing gender, race, and sexuality as cultural constructs—though historians have only begun to uncover the complex relationships among these constructed categories of difference.

Most obviously, this project builds on the rich body of literature on scientific racism and American racial thought. Foundational texts like Winthrop Jordan's White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812, George Fredrickson's The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914, William Stanton's The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America 1815-59, Steven Jay Gould, The Mismeasure of Man, and John Haller, Jr.'s Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900 are foundational for good reason and have proven very helpful here. But this project is also indebted to more recent scholarship that has begun to move this historiography in exciting new directions. Nancy Stepan's work on science and race in England, Latin America, and Brazil has opened the door for a gendered analysis of scientific racism in the United States, which this dissertation seeks to do. Not just a corrective to this earlier scholarship, Mia Bay's The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925 reminds us of the challenges of confronting hegemonic racial ideologies and just how high the stakes of ethnology were. Bay's nuanced portrayal of ethnology as an interracial site of contestation and race-making has shaped this project in innumerable ways.

The centrality of race in public discourse reached an apex in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the focus of my research, a time during which the body was imbued with enormous social meaning and significance. Within the multiple and intersecting discourses about bodies—evolution, hysteria, pathology, sexual difference, masculinity—race remained, to borrow Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham's useful

terminology, the metalanguage that wove those discourses together.⁶ Race determined how bodies would be interpreted and also how they would be treated as a result. Moreover, as historian Laura Briggs notes, “Race is not an attribute that inheres in bodies, but rather attaches itself to bodies through the ideological and material work of things like law, medicine, science, economy, education, literature, social science, public policy, and popular culture. Race in turn fundamentally shapes both the subject and content of those diverse fields.”⁷

Historians have also analyzed the critical role of science and medicine in shaping ideas about gender and biological sex. Alice Dreger’s Hermaphrodites: The Medical Invention of Sex examines changing medical treatment of intersexuality in England and France from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. In this text perhaps more than any other, we see how scientists and physicians quite literally constructed sex; as science developed over time, they attempted to manipulate sexually ambiguous bodies to fit into increasingly rigid gender roles, though those bodies were often more resistant than they expected. Lisa Moore and Adele Clarke’s “Clitoral Conventions and Transgressions: Graphic Representations in Anatomy Texts, c. 1900-1991,” bears much similarity to Laqueur, Schiebinger, and Dreger, in that it argues that anatomy, or specific parts of the body, can take on enormous cultural significance and reflect the gendered assumptions of both the scientists and the society in which they are writing. Like Laqueur, they show that anatomical images change over time to reflect changing ideology around gender and sexuality. The female body in particular thus represented a site of contestation and the

⁶ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” Signs, 17 (Winter 1992): 251-274.

⁷ Laura Briggs. “The Race of Hysteria: ‘Overcivilization’ and the ‘Savage’ Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology,” American Quarterly, 52:2 (June 2000): 253.

clitoris a source of debates among and between doctors and feminists.⁸ Anne Fausto-Sterling's Sexing the Body unpacks various theories of sex difference from scientific, medical, philosophical, and historical texts. As a biologist, she situates herself somewhere between the strict biological determinism of many of her scientific peers and social constructionism. While conceding the body's material foundation, she critiques what she sees as the false dichotomy between nature and nurture and asserts that the boundaries between the body and the world outside are more permeable than we think. Similar to Judith Butler's notion of the performative nature of gender, Sterling proposes that gender be read as a spectrum or fluid continuum. She also draws on Michel Foucault, arguing that the body is a site of knowledge production, and science the tool with which it is produced—though never in isolation from cultural influences. Moreover, she notes that the more feminists have attacked the norms and limitations of gender, the more scientists have been determined to find and prove biological differences of sex in an attempt to naturalize social distinctions or inequalities. As we will see, my discussion of nineteenth-century science demonstrates a similar trajectory and relationship between science and society. While scientists were driving and shaping American discourse on race in the nineteenth century, they were also in many regards reactionary. As nonwhite races—and women—resisted the sociopolitical limitations they faced and white male dominance was threatened, scientists rallied to ground their power in biology.

Mentioned previously, Laqueur's Making Sex and Schiebinger's Nature's Body have been particularly influential on my approach to science and my understanding of the body in history. As Schiebinger notes, scientists' cultural politics shape the questions

⁸ Lisa Jean Moore and Adele E. Clarke, "Clitoral conventions and transgressions: graphic representations

they ask and the conclusions they draw. Though often held up as objective fact, science both reflects and frequently maintains the cultural norms of its time, particularly those regarding gender and sex. The ways in which the natural world and the human body are interpreted and represented are imbued with ideas about gender, always implicitly, and sometimes quite explicitly. However, it is important to note that it is not simply a one-way flow of influence; even while the scientist turns his gaze toward and interprets his subjects, they in turn often resist, challenge, or shape the ways in which they are perceived. Similarly, Laqueur argues that biology and anatomy are viewed thru a cultural lens, that what we see when we look at the human body is irrevocably shaped by what we are looking for the body to tell us. Laqueur's characterization of science's teleological approach to the body and sex difference has profoundly shaped my analysis of science's relationship to race. Laqueur attributes the scientific shift from a one-sex to two-sex model in the eighteenth century in part to women's increasing occupation of the public sphere. The rise of "separate spheres" ideology in the century that followed insisted that men and women had different, though complimentary, roles and spaces in society—men in the world of work, politics, and civic engagement, women in the home and the realm of motherhood and domesticity. The body itself had not changed between the second century and the nineteenth. Rather, both models of sex difference reflected and reinforced the gender ideologies of the day.

Race is largely absent from Laqueur's story though and I would argue that it very much complicates the two-sex model, which he describes as hegemonic in Western science from the eighteenth century to today. In discussing the shift to a two-sex model

in anatomy texts, c. 1900-1991," *Feminist Studies*, 21:2 (1995): 225-301.

of sexual difference in scientific thought, Laqueur asserts, “No longer would those who think about such matters regard woman as a lesser version of man along a vertical axis of infinite gradations, but rather as an altogether different creature along a horizontal axis whose middle ground was largely empty.”⁹ However, the middle ground was not in fact empty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scientists exhibited considerable fascination with and concern over intermediacy, especially in the context of evolutionary theory and scientific concerns over racial mixture, immigration, and changing gender norms. The “lower races,” homosexuals, and “inverts” in particular came to inhabit a middle ground in the male/female binary Laqueur describes, with a variety of scientists seeking to explain, justify, and maintain their intermediate—and socially subordinate—position.¹⁰ Scientists and politicians alike characterized nonwhite and homosexual men and women as intermediate types, in both behavior and body, in a culture that idealized separate spheres, Victorian gentlemen, and domestic “angels of the house.”

More generally, scholars from a variety of disciplines have also looked at how gender is constructed and the ways in which it intersects with other categories. The nineteenth century has offered scholars a particularly rich site for such analysis, with ideas about women, domesticity, and separate spheres that continue to have ramifications today. My work is very much a part of this conversation and examines the ways in which American scientists used gender and sex to bolster their claims about racial difference (and vice versa). Kathleen Brown’s Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious

⁹ Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 148.

Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia, Jennifer Morgan's Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery, Kirsten Fischer's Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina, Deborah Gray White's Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South, and Gail Bederman's Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 have been models of intersectional analysis, demonstrating race and gender as mutually constructive at critical moments in American history and sparking my interest in this type of work. Historians are just beginning to explore the intersection of race and homosexuality in the United States, however.

Scholars like Lisa Duggan, Siobhan Somerville, and Kevin Mumford have raised important questions about that very relationship in turn-of-the-century American culture, which I take up in Chapter Three. In Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity and Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture, Duggan and Somerville both point to the vital role of science in shaping discourse on sexuality. Duggan's examines the murder trial of Alice Mitchell, accused of killing her "girl lover," Freda Ward, and the ensuing sensationalism around the case. Aside from the murder itself, what distinguished their relationship from other nineteenth-century romantic friendships between women was Alice's masculine demeanor and eschewal of "feminine" interests, characteristics to which the defense would point in her trial as evidence of her "insanity." Duggan asserts that what made Mitchell so threatening before and after the murder was not her love of another woman

¹⁰ "Invert" was a nineteenth century umbrella term for men or women who in some way transgressed gender norms in their appearance, mannerisms, or activities, which may or may not include sexual activity with members of the same sex.

but her perceived usurpation of white male privilege—the very thing that also made black men appear so threatening in American culture during the same period, which Duggan illustrates by juxtaposing “lesbian love murder” narratives and lynching narratives. Somerville also convincingly shows the extent to which race and homosexuality were mutually constructive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in science, which provided a framework in which homosexuality was often described as a third or intermediate race. Meanwhile, in Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century, Kevin Mumford looks at the responses of police, politicians, and vice squads to interracial homosexual encounters, among other illicit sexual activities, in America’s urban spaces and the ways in which these encounters represented a dual or compounded social threat.

At its core, this dissertation is an intellectual history of scientific thought on race and gender. However, it is not concerned only with ideas and discourse, but how such ideas were received and how they shaped the way real people were treated. Accordingly, my work examines a variety of sources, both textual and visual, to interrogate scientists’ engagement with social and political issues as well as the incursion of scientific thought into political culture. The dissertation follows a chronological as well as thematic structure and is divided into two sections.

Section One: Gendering Scientific Racism

The first section provides a gendered analysis of scientific racism from the antebellum era through the turn of the century—a framework all too often missing from

scholarship on American “sciences of race.” More than simply a corrective, close attention to gender in scientific thought on race challenges traditional understandings of the cultural politics of ethnology and demonstrates that ethnology’s tone and focus changed considerably over time, reflecting larger transformations in American politics and society. As it did, where in the body scientists looked for evidence of racial difference also changed. Put simply, earlier ethnology tended to focus on more gender-neutral features like skulls, hair, and skin, while in the years surrounding the Civil War, when scientists took up the profoundly gendered issues of slavery and citizenship, secondary sex characteristics such as beards and breasts also featured into their bodily analyses.

“Chapter One—‘Races of Men:’ Ethnology in Antebellum America” traces the rise of biological paradigms of racial difference and the development of ethnology as a field of scientific inquiry. It argues that early ethnology was entirely male-dominated; it focused on men, presumed a male audience, and was produced by male scientists. For example, the question of racial origins—the dominant concern in ethnology prior to the Civil War—was framed in terms of male lines of descent. Scientists debated whether the black and white races alike descended from Adam (rather than Adam and Eve) or if the black race could be traced to Ham, the cursed son of Noah. But while these scientists focused on men, “man” was a normative category that was subject to little scrutiny. With few exceptions, it was not until the Civil War that ethnologists began to explicitly analyze manhood—its physical parameters and political import—vis-à-vis questions of race.

“Chapter 2—‘An Equal Beard’ for ‘Equal Voting’: Gender, Slavery, and Citizenship in American Ethnology, 1850-1877” describes a transitional moment in American racial science. Leading up to and during the Civil War, ethnology became more closely linked to proslavery thought as well as more explicitly engaged with issues of gender and sex, a trend that continued into Reconstruction. Nearly invisible in earlier ethnology, women featured in scientific considerations of slavery during the 1850s and early 1860s, which often pointed to slave women's reproduction as indicative of slavery's overall health and viability. Moreover, while ethnologists continued to focus more often on men than women, “man” was no longer an unexamined category. On the contrary, ethnologists were deeply invested in defining what manhood meant. During the Civil War, military scientists conducted large-scale anthropometric studies of union troops, quite literally measuring manhood along racial lines. Then, during Reconstruction, ethnologists turned their attention to the question of black men's fitness for full citizenship, a political category attached to men alone. Many ethnologists argued against black male suffrage by insisting they were not really “men” in body or behavior and scientists often compared black men and women as having similarly limited intellectual capacities to illustrate that neither deserved the vote. With Emancipation and black and women’s suffrage posing a challenge to the traditional American definition of citizenship, ethnologists rallied to reassert the citizen body as inherently both white and male.

Section Two: Bodily Threats, Threatening Bodies

After Reconstruction, racial scientists were overtly engaged not just with gender, but also with sexuality and sexualized bodies. Amidst frequent discussions of

miscegenation and “race suicide,” they added reproductive organs to the list of physical characteristics they investigated for evidence of racial difference. Indeed, turn of the century ethnologists were quite preoccupied with sex. Concerned with a vast category they termed “sexual perversion,” America’s most prominent racial scientists also became the country’s first sexologists. Under this framework of “sexual perversion,” scientists were troubled by two manifestations in particular—homosexuality among whites, which they saw as threatening the race from within, and black male sexual aggression, which threatened the white race from the outside. The second section of the dissertation, then, examines the relationship between racial science and American discourse on sexuality. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racial scientists employed their established authority to offer solutions to the sexual threats they saw facing American society, threats that were also highly racialized.

“Chapter Three—Inverts, Perverts, and Primitives: Racial Thought and the American School of Sexology” demonstrates that racial science and sexology were not separate fields in America. They not only shared similar themes and concerns, they literally shared the same key scientists. Although turn-of-the-century scientists disagreed over the distinctions or overlap between homosexual acts, gender deviance, and physical hermaphroditism, scientific assessments of the causes of “sexual perversion” frequently broke down along racial lines. “Sexual perversion” among non-whites and the lower classes was characterized as vice, indicative of the physical and moral degeneracy of the group. In contrast, scientists usually read cases of “sexual perversion” or inversion in middle and upper class whites as symptomatic of individual pathology or disease, which many attributed to “overcivilization.” While African-Americans, immigrants, and the

lower class threatened moral corruption through the spread of their sexual vice, white homosexuals from respectable families threatened “race suicide.”

“Chapter Four—Unsexing the Race: Lynching, Racial Science, and Black Mobilization, 1893-1934,” argues that emasculation was central to both scientific and popular discourse on lynching as well as its practice. The waves of lynchings and demonization of black men as rapists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are well known. But less well known are scientific responses to lynching. For over three decades, numerous American scientists recommended surgical castration as an alternative to lynch violence. Far from marginal, these prominent scientists had a profound impact on American society outside the medical establishment. They lent scientific support for the “black beast rapist” trope, but positioned themselves as progressive reformers offering a medical solution to the problem, spurred on in part by increasingly negative publicity on lynching itself. In so doing, they sought to place the authority over America’s “race problem” in the hands of scientists rather than mobs. Meanwhile, lynch mobs often included castration as a crucial part of—rather than a substitute for—the lynching spectacle. Rather than an anomaly, the “castration remedy” represented a culmination of scientists’ intersecting concerns with race and sex, as well as their role as “social doctors” fixing America’s ills. In the 1920s and 30s, however, Walter White identified racial scientists as part of the problem, not the solution. White made debunking biological theories of black inferiority a key component of his anti-lynching work with the NAACP and sought strategic alliances with sympathetic scientists who could help him turn science against itself.

In summary, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scientists played a crucial role in constructing race as a biological category of difference and offered advice on the problems it presented in society. In Types of Mankind [1854], Josiah Nott declared ethnology to be “eminently a science for American culture.” Indeed, this particularly teleological science read into the body ideas about race that already permeated the national imaginary. As we will see, racial science shaped and was shaped by American race relations and political rhetoric. Scientists frequently used gender and sex difference to bolster their claims about racial hierarchy and police the category of citizenship, but precisely how sex and race intersected in scientific thought changed significantly over time, corresponding to specific sociopolitical concerns among the scientists.

SECTION ONE: GENDERING SCIENTIFIC RACISM

Chapter One—"Races of Men": Ethnology in Antebellum America

"In fine, have the woolly-headed races of men ever produced one, even only one man famous as either a lawgiver, statesman, poet, priest, painter, historian, orator, architect, musician, soldier, sailor, engineer, navigator, astronomer, linguist, mathematician, anatomist, chemist, physician, naturalist, or philosopher?" asked John Campbell in 1851. The Irish-born Philadelphian and founder of the city's Social Reform Society posed this important question in what he called his "text book for white men on the subject of negromania."¹¹ By the time of Campbell's writing, ethnology in the United States had become an established field of scientific inquiry and an influential, authoritative voice on race.¹² Largely a synthetic text, Negro-mania summarized the arguments of prominent ethnologists and recounted the field's central debates. But Campbell's introductory words are also illustrative of antebellum ethnology in perhaps less intentional ways. Firstly, the book's title indicates that Campbell had a narrow scope as to questions of race. Though subtitled "Being an examination of the falsely assumed equality of the various races of men," "Negro-Mania" suggests that his primary interest was in the black race specifically. More striking still, in his assessment of the history and capacity of the black race, Campbell speaks only in terms of men. His reference to "races of men" and his use of male pronouns may at first appear simply to reflect popular linguistic convention, whereby "men" is used to mean humans more generally. However, the list of esteemed male occupations in which blacks had presumably failed to succeed at any point in history indicates that a race of men was indeed the scope of his critique.

¹¹ John Campbell, Negro-Mania: Being an Examination of the Falsely Assumed Equality of the Various Races of Men (Philadelphia: Campbell and Power, 1851), 9-10.

Like the scientists whose work he describes, Campbell presents ethnology as being for and about men.

On the whole, antebellum ethnology contained relatively few references to women or explicit discussions of gender as an important human difference. It should not, however, be interpreted as a gender neutral discourse, but rather one in which men were rendered normative and race conceptualized in terms of male lineages. The themes that were central to ethnology prior to the Civil War included racial taxonomy, Biblical and anthropological histories of the races, the original unity or diversity of the races, and for some—though by no means all—ethnologists an explicit defense of slavery as part of the natural order and the African as physically designed for servitude. A conceptualization of race as deeply rooted in the body threaded through nearly all of antebellum ethnology. But whereas ethnology in the late nineteenth century exhibited more overt engagement with gender and with female bodies, prior to the 1850s ethnologists were preoccupied with less sex-specific characteristics like skulls, brains, bones, skin, and hair. Ethnologists often differed in their assessment of the extent and social implication of corporeal distinctions between the races but rarely differed in their acceptance of the distinctions themselves. Moreover, race in this literature was largely expressed as an issue of male descent. Racial scientists traced the history of each race through the deeds, accomplishments, and values of its men. Furthermore, though there was considerable disagreement in the field as to whether the races shared a singular origin, ethnologists on both sides of the most ubiquitous debate in antebellum ethnology framed their arguments in terms of male lineages in which women played no role.

¹² Ibid, 10.

Ethnology as a field of scientific inquiry was premised on the belief that the physical body revealed the intellectual, moral, and political capacities of its owner and, by implication, those of his or her race writ large. While this basic premise of ethnology remained relatively constant throughout its reign, the central questions and concerns of the field changed over the course of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The lack of critical gender analysis in discussions of scientific racism has obscured important changes in ethnology over the course of the nineteenth century that in turn reflected larger transformations in American politics and society. It is crucial, then, not to treat ethnology and racial thought as static throughout the nineteenth century.

Tracing the early history of ethnology as a field, its major thematic concerns and tensions, and the role of the body in understandings of racial difference, this chapter underscores the centrality of men in antebellum racial science. Men were the both the producers and the objects of scientific discourse; at a time when women had little claim to institutional power in America, it was the past, present, and future of the male sex that held the most consequence. This chapter then is above all the story of how ethnologists constructed a world inhabited solely by men, in which gender difference was subsumed and supplanted by the rubric of race.

The Gender of Race in Antebellum Ethnology

During the nineteenth century, racist ideology increasingly drew upon science for legitimacy and authority, following a model similar to that of sexist ideology, whereby popular ideas about the roles and capacities of men and women were naturalized as

biologically determined when science came of age in earlier centuries.¹³ Racism was not new, but as George M. Fredrickson points out in his influential The Black Image in the White Mind, the type of racism that gained strength throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries was “a rationalized pseudoscientific theory positing the innate and permanent inferiority of nonwhites.” Fredrickson perceptively distinguishes this new scientific racism from the “protoracist” prejudice and discrimination of prior centuries.¹⁴ His use of the term “pseudoscience” is somewhat misleading, however.

Ethnology, or the science of race, which both drove and reflected popular racial thought in nineteenth-century America, was not a field on the fringes of the scientific establishment. On the contrary, its proponents held degrees or professorships from universities like Princeton, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and Yale, maintained memberships in established and well-regarded organizations like the American Medical Association, the American Philosophical Society, and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, and gave lectures in such venues as the Smithsonian and the Royal Society of London. Nineteenth-century ethnologists should be termed scientists, not to lend credence to their long-discredited claims, but rather because their work was regarded as legitimate science by their contemporaries, and their qualifications and authority were rarely questioned even by those who might have taken issue with their conclusions.

Indeed, ethnologists were nineteenth-century experts on race. Though their personal backgrounds varied, most held medical degrees and a number taught biology,

¹³ On gender and science prior to the nineteenth century, see Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) and Londa Schiebinger, Nature's Body: Gender and the Making of Modern Science (Boston: Beacon, 1993).

anatomy, physiology, archeology, linguistics, or related topics at universities or medical schools. Proponents of scientific racism were well represented on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. In fact, as we shall see, many ethnologists lived in the North, due in large part to its greater number of medical and scientific institutions. Although now more associated with the Declaration of Independence and the birth of a nation that espoused freedom, liberty, and equality, Philadelphia, was home to a wealth of publishing companies and medical schools, which fueled an enormous output of ethnological work espousing racial difference. In the nineteenth century, republican ideology and racist doctrine often shared the same proponents, some even arguing that democracy for white men was dependent on the enslavement of blacks.¹⁵ Antebellum ethnology included no female scientists, although women of this era were beginning to make headway in other fields of science such as medicine and astronomy.¹⁶ Before the Civil War, ethnology was predominantly a science by and about men.

Josiah Nott—perhaps the most well-known ethnologist during his lifetime and the proponent of scientific racism most often cited by historians today—revealingly referred to ethnology as “niggerology” in a 1845 letter to proslavery South Carolina planter James Henry Hammond.¹⁷ But Types of Mankind, co-edited by Nott, began with a decidedly

¹⁴ George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), xvii.

¹⁵ Prolific ethnologist John Van Evrie in particular made this claim frequently, as discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. As demonstrated by works like Edmund Morgan’s American Slavery, American Freedom (New York: Norton, 1975) and David Brion Davis’ The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), slavery was essential to many white Americans’ definition of freedom.

¹⁶ See, for example, Londa Schiebinger, The mind has no sex: women in the origins of modern science (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); Mary Creese, Ladies in the laboratory?: American and British women in science, 1800-1900: a survey of their contributions to research (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 1998); Margaret Alice, Hypatia's heritage: a history of women in science from antiquity through the nineteenth century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Quoted in Fredrickson, 78.

more formal definition of the field. In this influential 1854 anthology representing the “American School of Ethnology,” Nott looked across the Atlantic to assert ethnology’s legitimacy: “Mr. Luke Burke, the bold and able Editor of the London Ethnological Journal, defines Ethnology to be ‘a science which investigates the mental and physical differences of Mankind, and the organic laws upon which they depend; and which seeks to deduce from these investigations, principles of human guidance, in all the important relations of social existence.’”¹⁸ Adopting this working definition of ethnology for the expansive volume to follow, Nott went on: “To the same author are we indebted not only for the most extensive and lucid definition of the term, but for the first truly philosophical view of a new and important science that we have met with in the English language.” He then proceeds to differentiate between ethnology and ethnography, describing ethnology as somewhat more all-encompassing:

The term “Ethnology” has generally been used as synonymous with “Ethnography,” understood as the Natural History of Man; but by Burke it is made to take a far more comprehensive grasp—to include the whole mental and physical history of the various Types of Mankind, as well as their social relations and adaptations.

“Under this comprehensive aspect,” Nott argued, the driving questions and social import of ethnology were far-reaching:

Ethnology demands to know what was the primitive organic structure of each race?—what such race’s moral and psychical character?—how far a race may have been, or may become, modified by the combined action of time and moral and physical causes?—and what position in the social scale Providence has assigned to each type of man?¹⁹

¹⁸ The “American School” was largely associated with polygenism, or the separate origin of the races, and Types of Mankind endeavored to harness “empirical evidence” from a variety of scientific disciplines in defense of the controversial theory. Polygenism, and the controversy surrounding it, is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

¹⁹ Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, eds., Types of Mankind, or Ethnological Researches, Based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and Upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History. 8th Edition (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1857,

Tellingly, Nott does not envision ethnology as merely science for science's sake, despite his claims elsewhere to political disinterest. Rather, ethnology was an endeavor with considerable appeal to and relevance for important men, including “the philanthropist, the naturalist, and the statesman.” As we shall see, the line between science and politics in nineteenth-century America was thin indeed.

Like Nott, Charles L. Brace, a New York social worker and personal friend of Charles Darwin, introduced his 1863 text The Races of the Old World: A Manual of Ethnology by defining ethnology for his audience. He stated, “Ethnology, according to its literal derivation, means the Science of Nations; but in the more comprehensive classification, nations have been divided according to descent or race, and the word has come to mean the Science of Races.” Also like Nott, he then differentiates between ethnology and ethnography, ultimately choosing to use the former term because of its wider familiarity: “Perhaps for a treatise like the present, if the word were not strange to common usage, Ethnography, or a Description of Races, would be a more appropriate

1854), 7. Though this study focuses on the United States, it is worth noting that there was a considerable amount of transatlantic exchange in racial thought between the U.S. and Europe during the nineteenth century. American ethnology was read in Europe, and a number of its practitioners read papers before the Royal Society in London, as well as other European venues. Several American ethnologists, including Josiah Nott, published articles in British ethnology or anthropology journals or had portions of their work reprinted therein. When an English edition of the popular French treatise, Arthur De Gobineau's The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races, with particular reference to their respective influence in the civil and political history of mankind, was published in the U.S. in 1856, it included as appendices tables of Samuel Morton's crania measurements and an essay by Josiah Nott advocating the theory of polygenesis. Within the text itself, De Gobineau wrote not just about France and Europe, but also at length about race relations in the U.S., noting that three of the most distinct races—white, black, and Native American—inhabited America, with Chinese immigration adding to the mix, thus making it an excellent case study in racial difference and the racial order, a sentiment numerous other European ethnologists shared. Another example still is that of British scientist Charles Darwin, who read and commented on (critically) the work of American ethnologists, and in turn, the influence of Darwin's work, though late in reaching its shores, eventually changed the face of racial science in the U.S. See also Bernth Lindfors, ed., Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

title.”²⁰ I borrow Brace’s definition of ethnology as the “science of race,” or more precisely, the sciences of race, to encompass the broad array of scientific disciplines focused on race in the nineteenth century, even if the scientist himself did not use the term.²¹

Largely forgotten today, in the nineteenth century ethnology was familiar to many. While Nott and Brace were careful to define the term for their nineteenth-century readers, the principles of scientific racism were by then at least a half century old, even if ethnology as a defined field was still developing. In the early colonial period in North America, European colonists initially distinguished themselves from Africans and Native Americans not on the basis of color distinctions but rather on the basis of religious and cultural differences. However, since cultures could adapt and people could convert, it soon became clear that society needed to be organized around differences that were both more visible and insurmountable if Europeans were to build and maintain their own power, authority, and dominance. Color filled the need for a means of conferring status that was immutable and readily apparent, and color thus gradually became the foundation through which difference was constructed and maintained, as demonstrated in Jefferson’s Notes on the State of Virginia. Over time Americans no longer considered themselves Anglo Christians, distinguished from the heathens in their mix, but as “white.” An inchoate and amorphous category, whiteness was defined not so much by what it was as by what it was not—Native American or African. More importantly though, it was a

²⁰ Charles Brace, The Races of the Old World: A Manual of Ethnology (New York: Charles Scribner, 1863), 1.

²¹ I mean “himself” literally, for, as previously mentioned, I have not identified any female ethnologists writing in the first half of the nineteenth century.

category with increasingly tangible rewards, including the rights and privileges of citizenship, in the developing nation leading up to and after independence.²²

While early ethnology contained few references to women, discussions of specifically male or female bodies, or considerations of the meanings of femininity and masculinity, this does not mean that early ethnology was gender neutral. Much of it was written in what psychologists and linguists refer to as the “masculine generic”—i.e. “man” and “mankind” to mean all of humankind. The fascinating title of one early ethnology text in particular, An account of a female of the white race of mankind, part of whose skin resembles that of a Negro; with some observations on the causes of the differences in color and form between the white and Negro races of men (1818), clearly demonstrates the linguistic specificity of women and the generality of “men.”²³ Other titles, such as Types of Mankind (1854), Natural History of the Prognathous Species of Mankind (1857), The Classification of Mankind (1850), and Races of Men (1850), seem to be simply conforming to this linguistic convention, but were indeed primarily about men.²⁴ As feminist scholars began arguing in the 1970s, the masculine generic functions

²² For more on the development of color prejudice, racism, and whiteness as a social category tied to citizenship, see Jill Lepore, The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity (New York: Vintage, 1999); Edmund Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2003, 1975); Anthony Parent, Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Kirsten Fischer, Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Melissa Stein, “Race as a Social Construction,” Black Women in America, 2nd Edition, Vol. 3, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-12.

²³ William Charles Wells, Two essays: one, Upon single vision with two eyes; the other, on dew; A letter to the Right Hon. Lloyd, Lord Kenyon; and An account of a female of the white race of mankind, part of whose skin resembles that of a Negro; with some observations on the causes of the differences in color and form between the white and Negro races of men. By the Late William Charles Wells, M.D., F.R.S., L. and E. With a memoir of his life, written by himself (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818).

²⁴ Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, eds., Types of Mankind, or Ethnological Researches, Based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and Upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History. Eighth Edition (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1857, 1854); Samuel Cartwright, “The Natural History of the Prognathous Race of Mankind” [1857] in The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Chief Justice Taney, with an Introduction by Dr. J.H. Van Evrie.

to reinforce men and masculinity as normative, while simultaneously rendering women invisible.²⁵ As both a linguistic convention and a scientific framework in ethnological writing, the masculine generic reinforced man as normative at the very same time that such writing interrogated the category of race with regard to the differences “between men.” In other words, early ethnologists both used “man” or “men” in this generic sense and limited their discussion to men as a sex.

Indeed, when antebellum ethnologists spoke of a race or races, they usually meant men specifically. For example, in the popular anthology, Types of Mankind, Nott provided a detailed taxonomy of the races of the world and often characterized a particular race by the thickness of its beards. Although he was ostensibly describing each race as a whole, he chose a male feature to represent physical difference between the races. More typically though, ethnologists’ discussions of the body usually centered on skin or non-reproductive organs such as lungs or kidneys, skulls, and hair common to both sexes.²⁶ But even then, the sociopolitical import for which these body parts were

Also, an Appendix, containing an essay on the Natural History of the Prognathous Race of Mankind, originally written for the New York Day-Book, By Dr. S.A. Cartwright, of New Orleans (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1863); Peter A. Browne, Esq., The Classification of Mankind, By the hair and wool of their Heads, with an answer to Dr. Prichard’s assertion, that “The covering of the head of the negro is hair, properly so termed, and not wool.” Read before the American Ethnological Society, November 3, 1849. (Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1850); Robert Knox, The Races of Men (London: Henry Renshaw, 1850).

²⁵ Moreover, the masculine generic in the English language is not a natural or transhistorical convention, but rather a relatively recent grammatical rule, tracing its origins to the eighteenth century, the result of efforts by British grammarians. One such grammarian, John Kirby, wrote in his 1746 text “Eighty-Eight Grammatical Rules” that because the male gender is “more comprehensive” “man” and “mankind” may be used to refer to all people, further stating, “The masculine Person answers to the general name which comprehends both male and female.” This, rule 21 of his eighty-eight grammatical rules, was then made a legal standard by an act of the British Parliament in 1850. On the masculine generic, see Ann Bodine, “Androcentrism in prescriptive grammar: singular ‘they,’ sex indefinite ‘he,’ and ‘he or she,’” Language in Society, 4 (1975): 129-146; and Ann Weatherall, Gender, Language and Discourse (East Sussex and New York: Routledge, 2002), 14-17 in particular.

²⁶ While studies of skulls like Morton’s often specified the sex of each skull, more general ethnology texts would often refer to such studies and talk about differences in cranial capacities along racial lines without regard for sex.

read—whether they indicated a capacity to govern or lead armies, for example, as Campbell queried—was implicitly male-centered.

In addition to its overwhelming focus on men, antebellum ethnology was also quite often literally black and white in its approach to race. Nott, for example, was prone to characterizing ethnology as “the nigger business.”²⁷ Nott’s choice of words is telling in two regards. One, it illuminates that ethnology was hardly the objective science its advocates claimed it to be. Second, it is indicative of antebellum ethnology’s overwhelming focus on the black race. Indeed, as Figure 1 demonstrates, 54 percent of all racial science texts published from 1830 to 1859 were explicitly focused on African-Americans, as compared to 21 percent for Native Americans, the race emphasized in the next largest number of American ethnological publications.²⁸ Here, too, Nott provides an example of the dominance of examinations of African-Americans, or of blacks and whites comparatively, in antebellum scientific discourse on race. In his Two Lectures, on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races, he declares, “The Anatomical and Physiological differences, between the Caucasian, the Malay, Mongol, Indian and Negro races, have elicited a great deal of scientific research, and I might very well write an octavo on these points alone. Time, however, compels me to restrict my lecture to a parallel between the Caucasian and Negro races.”²⁹ Many other American ethnological texts in the antebellum period and beyond began with similar disclaimers; that some of

²⁷ Fredrickson, 78.

²⁸ Many ethnology texts pointed to three races in America: black, white, and red, in nineteenth century ethnological language. Of these texts, some compared all three at length, while others contained brief discussions of Native Americans before focusing on African-Americans alone or in comparison to whites. My data is based on citations for scientific texts on race in the Index-Catalogue of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), first published in 1880 and cataloging materials dating from the fifth century. For more on the Index-Catalogue and my methodology, see Appendix.

these works were voluminous and years in the making, several with numerous contributors, implies that time was not in fact the issue. Furthermore, even those texts that were ostensibly on race in general, as indicated by their titles (22 percent of texts published between 1830 and 1859), also usually focused most of their attention on the black race specifically or on comparing the black and white races, after first delineating and characterizing the races of the world more broadly.³⁰

In antebellum ethnology, the white race was usually normative whereas the black race was scrutinized for evidence of difference and deviance. New York proslavery ethnologist John Van Evrie even glibly proposed that the African existed for the sole purpose of comparison: “We must, therefore, admit that God designed the Negro for juxtaposition with the superior white man, otherwise he would be created in vain, a supposition, of course, not to be tolerated a moment. Moreover, his wonderful capacity of imitation—that striking quality which those ignorant of his nature have often mistaken for real capacity—is a positive proof that God designed him to exist in juxtaposition with the superior race.”³¹

“Are all Races Descended from Adam?”: The “Great Question” of Antebellum Ethnology

More than any other topic in ethnology prior to the Civil War, the issue of the original unity or diversity of the races was both contentious and ubiquitous, mentioned if

²⁹ Josiah C. Nott, *Two Lectures, on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races* (Mobile: Dade and Thompson, 1844), 23.

³⁰ It should be noted that studies that were explicitly focused on comparing the black and white races are included in the “black” category in the chart, rather than separated out as a distinct category. This is not intended to reinforce white as normative, but to demonstrate the extent to which whites were utilized as such in comparative studies in the 1830-1850 period, for no texts appeared in the NLM search for this specific period that were focused on the white race alone rather than whites as a point of comparison.

³¹ John Van Evrie, “Abolition is National Death” (1866) in *Anti-Black Thought, Vol. 1: Anti-Abolition Tracts and Anti-Black Stereotypes*, ed. John David Smith (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 5.

not discussed ad nauseum in nearly every text in the field. A quarter of all scientific publications on race between 1830 and 1859 were explicitly focused on the question of racial origins, while many texts focused on other themes were shaped by or employed toward the debate between monogenesisism and polygenesisism.³² For example, studies of crania regularly provided “empirical evidence” on the plurality of racial origins, whereas discussions of racial mixture and hybridity frequently intersected with the origins issue. Numerous ethnologists claimed that the offspring of black and white parents could produce no “permanent stock,” thus proving the races to be separate species entirely. Like most discussions in antebellum ethnology, considerations of racial origins were generally framed in terms of men. Ethnologists often pondered whether black men were the sons of Adam, or if all the races had descended from one father, not whether the races descended from Adam and Eve. Similarly, ethnologists charged that African Americans were the “sons of Ham” as evidence of their longstanding inferiority and position of servitude. The “Curse of Ham” myth derived from an odd Biblical story in which Noah punished his son Ham for viewing Noah’s naked body by declaring Ham’s son Canaan “the slave of slaves.” All of Canaan’s descendants were likewise cursed to a life of servitude.³³ Just as surnames and property were passed down patrilineally in nineteenth-century US society, so too was racial lineage an issue of male descent.

³² Data based on citations in the NLM Index-Catalogue.

³³ On Biblical histories and race, particularly the “Curse of Ham” so often employed as an anti-black argument, see Winthrop Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), especially 3-44; Mia Bay, The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas About White People, 1830-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26-55; and Fredrickson, 71-96.

A brief review of the racial origins debate illuminates ethnology's development as a field.³⁴ In his 1863 text, The Races of the Old World, New Yorker Charles Brace, an early enthusiast of the work of Charles Darwin, described the debate over “the Unity or Diversity of Origin of Mankind” as “the great question at the basis of the Science.”³⁵ Brace was precisely right in his identification of the “great question” at the heart of ethnology. Indeed, up to the early 1860s, questions about the original unity or diversity of the races constituted both the driving force and central theme of most ethnological writing (see Figure 3). Likewise, discussions of this debate have dominated historical scholarship on scientific racism.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, ethnological arguments about race centered on the debate between polygenesis and monogenesis. Theologian and Princeton president Samuel Stanhope Smith, an early and widely respected authority in the field, made a case for monogenesis, or the shared origin of the races, in his Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species, originally published in 1787 and reprinted in an expanded version in 1810.³⁶ He argued that all races were members of the same species and shared a common ancestry. Current physical differences resulted from environmental factors, particularly climate, and the divergent lifestyles of “savagery” and “civilization.” Unlike most ethnologists, Smith was almost entirely gender neutral in discussion of the effects of climate and lifestyle on human complexion. He used terms like “mankind” in adherence to the masculine generic

³⁴ For much of the basic chronology of the racial origins debate in American ethnology, I am indebted to Fredrickson's The Black Image in the White Mind, chapter three (71-96).

³⁵ Charles L. Brace, The Races of the Old World: A Manual of Ethnology (New York: Charles Scribner, 1863), 1. Brace and Darwin also appeared to be friends, with Brace and his wife visiting Darwin's home in Down, England in the summer of 1872, as described in The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, Vol. 2, edited by his son, Francis Darwin (New York: Basic Books, 1959, 1888), 343.

language convention of the day, but inferred through the context of his words neither an implicit nor explicit focus on men alone. However like most contemporaries who subscribed to the theory of monogenesis, he argued that other races had degenerated from the white, superior race—the human norm by which all others were defined as deviant. Smith believed that blacks could become equal to whites, subject to the same environmental and lifestyle conditions, but only by literally turning white through subsequent generations—through both adaptation to the environment and mixture with whites.³⁷

Although Smith's tacit acceptance of miscegenation raised some eyebrows, his theories regarding the origin of color difference between the races went largely unchallenged until the publication of Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race in 1830 by North Carolina-born Dr. Charles Caldwell. In fact, Caldwell had begun to attack Smith's argument in essays dating back to 1811 and some of Caldwell's proponents credited the publication of Thoughts with hastening Smith's death, a charge Caldwell himself denied.³⁸ Caldwell argued for polygenesis, or the separate creation of the races as distinct species. He drew on biblical chronology and asserted that the “superior” white intellect could not be due simply to differences in environment, but rather must be an innate “gift of nature.”³⁹ Answering the vocal critics who rejected claims of the separate origins of the races as heretical because they diverged from the

³⁶ At the time of Smith's writing, Princeton's name was the “College of New Jersey.”

³⁷ For more on Smith's theories and influence, see Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind, 72. For more on ideas about climate and racial difference, see William Stanton, The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America 1815-59 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 7-10.

³⁸ Charles Caldwell, Autobiography of Charles Caldwell, M.D. With a Preface, Notes, and Appendix by Harriot W. Warner; Introduction by Lloyd G. Stevenson, M.D. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968, 1855), XXIII, 447.

³⁹ Fredrickson, 73.

Biblical account of all human beings descending from Adam and Eve, he positioned himself as a man of science and reason who respected theology but also sought truth, which “can never prove unfriendly to sound religion.” “On the contrary,” he continued, “it is auxiliary to it. The most dangerous enemies of religion, are those persons who would make it an instrument to trammel the human intellect, and arrest the progress of knowledge, by preventing free inquiry and discussion.”

While a number of other antebellum ethnologists distanced themselves from the issue of slavery, particularly prior to the 1850s, Caldwell went so far as to offer a mild denunciation of the institution, albeit a critique based on a belief in racial hierarchy. “The Caucasians are not justified in either enslaving the Africans or destroying the Indians, merely because their superiority in intellect and war enables them to do so.” Echoing Jefferson, he added, “Such practices are an abuse of power; and where is there privilege that is not liable to abuse?” Nonetheless, as a scientist and seeker of “truth,” he was not responsible for how his work might be used; he was “not answerable for consequences, provided his representation of nature be correct.” He derived such authority not just from science but from God himself: “If it be not wrong in the Deity to frame some species of men inferior to others, it cannot be wrong in him to assert and endeavor to prove it.”⁴⁰

As George Frederickson reveals, while several European texts in favor of polygenesis were well-received among Southern intelligentsia, the theory of separate origins of the races did not become widely accepted until the 1840s and 50s, with the emergence of the “American school of ethnology.”⁴¹ This school of thought was originated in large part by two important texts, published in 1839 and 1844,

⁴⁰ Charles Caldwell, Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race, vi.

respectively—*Crania Americana*, by Dr. Samuel Morton (1799-1851) of Philadelphia, and *Crania Aegyptiaca*, which Morton co-authored with British-born Egyptologist George Gliddon (1809-1857). Morton collected a dizzying number and variety of human skulls and subjected each to a series of measurements, from which he drew inferences about the intellectual abilities of the skull's deceased owner, and the tribe or race he represented. Whereas phrenology, which was also popular during the nineteenth century, read the bumps on the head for clues about personality traits and abilities, craniology measured and/or weighed the capacity of the skull: the bigger the capacity, the bigger the brain it must have held and thus the bigger the intellect and reason.⁴²

Indeed, the human head held tremendous significance for racial scientists throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although the “truths” it was thought to reveal changed over time in accordance with new social and political contexts. Constituting 15 percent of scientific texts on Native Americans and 8 percent of all other texts on racial science in the period between 1830 and 1859, studies focused primarily on brains or skulls loomed larger than their numbers in terms of prominence and influence. The head received far more scientific emphasis than any other part of the body during that period. An 1860 article in *The American Journal of Science and Arts* offered an explanation why the head was so important to ethnologists. “The seat of those faculties which lie at the base of all the peculiarities of human races,” the head bore “essentially and intimately upon their manners and customs, all their institutions, their religious

⁴¹ Fredrickson, 74.

⁴² Yet another variation of scientific studies of the human head was craniometry, a subset of anthropometrics, which measured the dimensions of the heads of living human beings, with largely the same purpose as craniology—to reflect on intellectual capacity.

impulses, their capacity for civilization, and the development to which it has attained.”⁴³

Moreover, Morton’s crania studies in particular continued to figure in the writings of many ethnologists who followed him as evidence of black inferiority—well after the theory of polygenesis, of which his measurements had been offered as evidence, had fallen out of favor.

As biologist Steven Jay Gould has pointed out in his debunking of biological determinism, The Mismeasure of Man, a major flaw in Morton’s methodology was that he failed to adjust his data for differences of sex. Morton’s skull collection contained a mix of male and female crania, and he did not attach any additional significance to the skulls according to their sex; indeed, it was race rather than gender for which he read the skulls. He made little effort to distinguish the sex of his skulls, which Gould argues skewed Morton’s results, not to mention the conclusions he drew from them. His sample of non-white races included more female skulls, usually smaller in size than male skulls, and the smaller average skull size he calculated for those races were read as evidence of their inferiority. In other words, he read sex difference within a race as proof of physiological and intellectual difference between the races.⁴⁴ Ironically—and largely unintentionally—then, it was bodies of women that were equated with racial inferiority in this particular instance. Nonetheless, Morton’s Crania Americana received favorable reviews when it was published and continued to be enormously influential and widely cited throughout the nineteenth century.⁴⁵

⁴³ Joseph Barnard Davis, “On the Method of Measurements, as a diagnostic means of distinguishing Human Races, adopted by Drs. Scherzer and Schwarz, in the Austrian circumnavigatory Expedition of the ‘Novara,’” The American Journal of Science and Arts, 29:2 (May 1960): 329-330.

⁴⁴ On the problems in Morton’s studies regarding the gender of his skulls, see Steven Jay Gould, The Mismeasure of Man, 61-64.

⁴⁵ Stanton, 39-41.

Not only were crania studies referenced frequently by other ethnologists, but they often represented the public face so to speak of the racial sciences outside of the scientific world. For example, one 1848 political cartoon uses phrenology—one of the most popular of the cranial sciences outside the scientific establishment—in its satirical attack on presidential candidate Zachary Taylor (see Figure 4).⁴⁶ In the background of the cartoon are several heads or skulls lined up on shelves like specimens. All of the heads appear to be male, unlike Morton's own mixed-gender crania collection. Furthermore, each of the white men was a figure recognizable to the cartoon's audience, including Martin Van Buren, James Watson Webb, and Henry Clay. The black man, however, is unidentified and anonymous, although a recognizable black man would not have been difficult to find, as Frederick Douglass was speaking across the northern United States during the same decade the cartoon was printed. The anonymous and racialized heads on the shelf are necessary components to make the scene recognizable to the audience as a typical snapshot of scientific inquiry into human mental characteristics; the unexpected faces of the famous men are what constitute the joke. Though a satire to be sure, the cartoon nonetheless reflects an important and perhaps unintentional truth about the preponderance of such science in mid-century America: both the scientist and his subjects were male.

Morton and his contemporaries used the human head as an ethnological tool in racial taxonomies and in determining the intellectual capacities of the races, but the most prominent use of craniology in the antebellum period revolved around the question of the original unity or diversity of the races. In the introduction to his Crania Americana,

⁴⁶ "The Candidate of Many Parties. A Phrenological Examination to Ascertain What His Political

Morton referred to the prominence of the question in the scientific world, stating, “the physical characteristics, preserved through numerous generations, and often under very dissimilar circumstances, has occasioned various speculations in respect to the origin of the human family.”⁴⁷ Though Morton himself did not engage the issue as extensively as the ethnologists he influenced, he did note that differences in skull size and shape between the races seemed to date to antiquity, and speculated that differences in mental and moral character were ancient as well: “From remote ages the inhabitants of every extended locality have been marked by certain physical and moral peculiarities, common among themselves, and serving to distinguish them from all other people.”⁴⁸ For Morton, the physical features of each race were the same today as they had been in antiquity, which implied that the races had originated separately. In his estimation, these features varied across five races, which he ranked in order of skull size and corresponding intellectual ability: Caucasian, Mongolian, Malay, American, and Ethiopian. Interestingly, when listing the physical characteristics of each race, Morton discussed the propensity for beard, or lack thereof, as among those characteristics, but did not generally discuss female anatomical features. For Morton and many of his contemporaries in ethnology, racial taxonomy meant classifying and differentiating between the men of the world.

Despite claims of scientific objectivity, Morton did not shy away from commenting on issues of tremendous political import, reading the character and fates of Native Americans and African-Americans through his skulls. Of the former, he posited:

Principles Are” [1848], HarpWeek, *American Political Prints, 1766-1876*, <http://loc.harpweek.com>.

⁴⁷ Samuel Morton, *Crania Americana; or, a comparative view of the skulls of various aboriginal nations of north and south America* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson; London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1839), 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 1.

“However much the benevolent mind may regret the inaptitude of the Indian for civilisation [sic], the affirmative of this question seems to be established beyond a doubt. His moral and physical nature are alike adapted to his position among the races of men, and it is as reasonable to expect the one to be changed as the other. The structure of his mind appears to be different from that of the white man, nor can the two harmonise [sic] in their social relations except on the most limited scale.”⁴⁹ As with much of antebellum ethnology, though it may first appear that Morton is simply using “man,” “men,” and “his” in the conventional generic sense, the context reveals that he means men as a sex specifically. Morton refers to social relations, intellect, and capacity for civilization, all of which were associated with the masculine realm at this point, indicating that Native American and white women fell outside the scope of his racial comparison.

While he did not explicitly comment on slavery, Morton’s assessment of “the negro” contained would have been compatible with a defense of the institution, which mirrored the language of numerous proslavery apologists: “The Negroes are proverbially fond of their amusements, in which they engage with great exuberance of spirit; and a day of toil is with them no bar to a night of revelry.... They appear to be fond of warlike enterprises, and are not deficient in personal courage; but, once overcome, they yield to their destiny, and accommodate themselves with amazing facility to every change of circumstances.”⁵⁰ Morton’s reference to “warlike enterprises” and “personal courage,” then associated with men, indicates that to him the race’s men and the race overall were synonymous.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 82.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Morton dealt with the question of the origin of the races indirectly for the most part, while also providing support for the polygenesis argument. Indeed, he often stated that his task was merely to categorize human beings, not to speculate on how such diversity came to be.⁵¹ But in his study of human skulls, he had concluded that each race had changed little, if at all, in regards to physical characteristics and, by implication, mental abilities. That conclusion, along with his extensive measurements, provided countless ethnologists who followed him with the “empirical” data they needed to argue for the original and permanent diversity of the races. Though Morton himself was more ambiguous on the origins question in public—at times strongly implying a belief in polygenesis or presenting the separate origin of the races as likely if not certain and other times coyly avoiding the question entirely—his work would for decades be cited by other ethnologists in support of polygenesis. Moreover, despite his own occasional public equivocations on the issue, Morton has been regarded by contemporaries and historians alike as the founding father of the “American School of Ethnology,” nearly synonymous with polygenesis by the mid-nineteenth century.

Moreover, Morton’s work also provided scientific support for proslavery apologists such as Nott, who became the most enthusiastic, vocal, and venomous advocate of the new American ethnology. And unlike Morton, proving the separate origins of the races was his stated goal.⁵² First published in Philadelphia in 1854, Types of Mankind, an anthology of ethnological work, was co-edited by Nott, a physician with a private practice in Mobile, Alabama, and George Gliddon, a former U.S. consul in

⁵¹ Samuel Morton, *An Inquiry into the Distinctive Characteristics of the Aboriginal Race of America* (Philadelphia: John Pennington, 1844). First read at the Annual Meeting of the Boston Society of Natural History, on April 27, 1842.

⁵² Fredrickson, 78.

Cairo, Egypt. Types of Mankind also contained contributions from Swiss-born naturalist and outspoken polygenesist Louis Agassiz and the late Samuel Morton, to whom the volume was dedicated. Indeed, Nott heralded Morton as “the Founder of the American School of Ethnology,” which the anthology sought to represent.⁵³ The dedication to Morton was no idle sentiment; the imprint of Morton’s work could be found all over Types of Mankind. Making frequent reference to Morton’s crania studies in support of polygenesis, the popular anthology, in its eighth edition by 1857, also drew heavily on Egyptian history and art, which both Nott and Gliddon interpreted as showing the ancient Egyptians to be white but their slaves black. Thus, they argued for the innate inferiority of blacks and prove that the relationship between the white and black races had long, perhaps always, been that of master and slave.

Interestingly, Nott evoked male images of the white race similar to those evoked by his most vocal critics, black ethnologists. But where numerous black ethnologists denounced whites as vicious warmongers, Nott heralded a conquering white race asserting its rightful place in the natural order.⁵⁴ Both groups were ostensibly speaking of the white race as a whole, but as neither conquering nor warmongering were activities linked to women in the nineteenth century, it would seem that their respective assessments of the white race revolved around its men. Nott in particular naturalized the racial status quo as something trans-historical and unchangeable by human action or law, describing the world as the eminent domain of the white race, which was destined “to conquer and hold every foot of the globe where climate does not interpose an

⁵³ Nott and Gliddon, eds., Types of Mankind, 87.

⁵⁴ On masculinity as central to black ethnology, see Bay, White Image in the Black Mind, especially pages 38-42 and 221-222. On antebellum black ethnologists’ assessment of whites (white men in particular) as

impenetrable barrier.” He further asserted, “No Philanthropy, no legislation, no missionary labors can change this law; it is written in man’s nature by the hand of his creator.”⁵⁵ This often cited passage is notable not just for its explicitly political interpretation of the past in defense of the present, but also as an example of gendered language in antebellum ethnology. While “man’s nature” could appear to mean “human nature,” the overall language and tone of the passage reflects traits and domains associated with men in antebellum America, revealing that Nott’s subject was indeed specifically male.

Although well received in some intellectual circles, Nott’s position was resisted by many Americans, especially in the South, who objected to his blasphemous rejection of the Biblical story of Creation despite their overwhelming acceptance of his claim regarding black inferiority.⁵⁶ Despite his critique of the Bible, Nott was hardly a devoted scientist defending “fact” and rationality in the face of religious condemnation and oppression. Indeed, he was not even particularly committed to the notion of polygenesis, but rather to the “practical fact” of permanent black inferiority, however it had originated. “Whether an original diversity of races be admitted or not, the permanence of existing physical types will not be questioned by any archaeologist or Naturalist of the present day.” The “consequent permanence of moral and intellectual peculiarities” were

brutal predators, a trope Bay coins the “Angry Saxon,” see pages 45-55. Black ethnologists are also discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Fredrickson, 79.

⁵⁶ According to George Fredrickson, Northern acceptance of theories of polygenesis and black inferiority was part of a larger democratic ideology that, even in its celebration of the “common man,” was quick to emphasize democracy as for whites only, defending “racial distinctions in an otherwise egalitarian society because, unlike the odious class divisions of Europe, they were based on the natural inequalities” (page 91). For more on the controversies between religious and scientific accounts of racial origins in American ethnology, see Mason Stokes, “Someone’s in the Garden with Eve: Race, Religion, and the American Fall,” *American Quarterly*, 50:4 (December 1998).

undeniable as well: “The intellectual man is inseparable from the physical man.”⁵⁷ Nott’s argument here, articulated in Types of Mankind, is representative of nineteenth-century ethnology in its insistence on the “practical fact” of racial hierarchy and the firm belief that one’s moral character and intellectual ability is inscribed upon and irrevocably determined by the physical body.

The debate between monogenesis and polygenesis was addressed by virtually all antebellum ethnologists, in a variety of venues, and always with reference to men. In an article entitled “Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” first published in the May 1852 issue of the New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, prominent Louisiana physician Samuel Cartwright exemplified the interplay between religion, politics, and science in antebellum ethnology. This interplay is made all the more striking by his publication in a medical journal—presumably not the typical venue for religion and politics. After delineating some of the allegedly distinct anatomical features of the black race which made blacks natural slaves, he turned his attention to the question of unity, discussing the male lineage of the white race: “I have thus hastily and imperfectly noticed some of the more striking anatomical and physiological peculiarities of the negro race. The question may be asked, Does he belong to the same race as the white man? Is he a son of Adam? Does his peculiar physical conformation stand in opposition to the Bible, or does it prove its truth? These are important questions, both in a medical, historical and theological point of view.”⁵⁸ Likewise, he argues that all three

⁵⁷ Quoted in Fredrickson, 81-82.

⁵⁸ Cartwright’s language here seems to be both conforming to and a step beyond the more common masculine generic conventions of using “him” as a gender neutral pronoun or “man” to means all humanity. First he speaks of the “negro race” then questions whether “he” belongs to the same race as the “white man.” He then questions whether the black man is the “son of Adam,” not whether blacks and whites belong to the same race and are the “progeny” or “descendants” of “Adam and Eve” rather than

perspectives must be employed to ascertain the answer: “They [the questions above] can better be answered by a comparison of the facts derived from anatomy, physiology, history and theology to see if they sustain one another.”⁵⁹

Cartwright found a philosophical opponent in New York ethnologist Charles Brace, though they shared a similar language of gender. Brace challenged Cartwright’s claim that the unity question could only be answered by examining science, theology, and history together; for Brace, “the subject is purely scientific.” While a monogenesisist, Brace shared Cartwright’s male framework of racial descent. Brace, who as previously noted had declared the issue of the unity or diversity of origin “the great question at the basis of the Science,” devoted an entire (and lengthy) chapter of The Races of the Old World to the subject. In sharp contrast to Nott and Cartwright, Brace was careful to divorce the science of racial difference from possible social and political application, but he did not reject the basic premise of racial hierarchy. And ironically, he employed the same paternalistic framework of race relations and male focus as the proslavery colleagues he critiqued. In Brace’s discussion of the “races of men,” humanity constituted a “brotherhood” with God as its “Father.” While “the moral Brotherhood of man does not depend on community of descent,” this community did not appear to include women, for it is apparently possible for mankind to have “one parent” rather than one pair of parents.⁶⁰

Adam alone. One suspects, however, that his word choice was less a conscious decision to render women invisible than a reflection of the entirely male-centric world view that Cartwright shared with his colleagues and intended audience.

⁵⁹ Samuel Cartwright, “Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal (May 1852). Reprinted as “Cartwright on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:5 (July 1854): 110.

⁶⁰ Charles L. Brace, The Races of the Old World: A Manual of Ethnology (New York: Charles Scribner, 1863), 441. Of course, referring to God as male, as “Father,” was hardly unique to ethnology, or even the

Not all northern ethnologists shared Brace's views on slavery or racial origins, but ethnologists across regional and political lines framed race and racial descent in terms of men. A New Yorker like Brace, John Van Evrie, a physician, editor, and proslavery pamphleteer, argued that the actions of the monogenesists, despite their words, proved the "fact" of the races being distinct species with separate origins. "If the Negro had descended from the same parentage, or, except in color merely, was the same being as ourselves, then there could be no reason for refusing to amalgamate with him as with the several branches of our race," he began. "But on the contrary, the reverend and distinguished gentleman who has ventured to declare that the belief that the Negro is a being like ourselves, is essential to Christianity, would infinitely prefer the death of his daughter to that of marriage with the most accomplished and most pious Negro in existence!"⁶¹ Here, "a negro" meant a black man specifically. Drawing on the controversial image of a white woman with a black man (which would become even more volatile as the century drew to a close), Van Evrie used the specter of miscegenation as a challenge to those who would defend the African's place in the human family.

Sterile Hybrids and the Species of Men: Racial Mixture, Taxonomy, and Human Descent

Racial mixture also featured in the origins debate in antebellum ethnology. Numerous ethnologists of the era argued that the offspring between a black parent and white parent were largely infertile and thus incapable of producing a "permanent stock"

nineteenth century in general, but rather represents a longstanding Judeo-Christian convention dating back to ancient scripture.

⁶¹ Van Evrie, *Negroes and Negro "Slavery"*, 59.

beyond that first generation. This proved that the two races constituted separate species. Indeed, the word “mulatto” derived from the word “mule” or “a sterile hybrid.”

Not surprisingly, both black and white women were more present in discussions of racial mixture than in general considerations of the original unity or diversity of the races. Even though “mulatto” men and women alike were thought to be weak and largely infertile, discussions of sterile hybridity were more likely to target biracial women specifically as bad breeders. For example, Drs. H.A. Ramsey and W.T. Grant, the editors of the Georgia Blister and Critic, a journal largely dedicated to scientific justifications of chattel slavery, asked its readers: “In the cross of the white and negress, do the Ovary Cells diminish with each cross, until the fourth, and then nearly disappear entirely?” Like Van Evrie characterizing miscegenation between a black man and white woman as an absurdity, the Blister’s focus on the “cross of the white and negress” hinted at the reality of interracial sex in antebellum America. More often than not, it occurred between white men and black women in a culture in which the bodies of female slaves were legally owned by their white masters, and even free black women’s rights to their own bodies were frequently ignored in law and practice.

Hoping to collect opinions and anecdotal evidence from the Blister’s readership to assist his research, Samuel Cartwright had submitted this revealing query about ovary cells, but he was less interested in women per se than in uncovering further evidence of (permanent) racial difference. For their part, the Ramsey and Grant were happy to oblige, noting that “the question is important, and we ask for it a candid and careful investigation.” They admitted they had “presumed an answer, without the necessary data to confirm it.” Their presumptive answer presented no information about black, however.

Instead, it made an observation about animals, just as Jefferson had done in the previous century in his own discussion of racial mixture. The editors wrote, “We think it quite probable that the Ovary Cells in the cross of the negress and white, may diminish, until sterility would be the result. Our dissections are not ample enough to determine the point precisely, but we see a cross in the horse and mule, produce sterility and why not in the white and black biped race? We see no reason to question.” They concluded by offering their own anecdotal example: “We will here remark, we had a negro man...with a wife, who is a fourth cross, as far as we can ascertain. She does not breed, although healthy, and her husband has been heretofore the father of children.” Perhaps not surprisingly in a society in which black women, particularly slaves, so often faced sexual exploitation that made the paternity of their children either difficult to ascertain or all too tempting for whites to ignore, white men wanted to believe that “mulatto” women in particular were sterile—at least by the fourth cross.⁶²

However, investigations of hybridity usually focused less on women—white or black—than on the the question of whether the races constituted different species or variations of the same species. In a two-part lecture before the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia in 1846, later published as an article in the American Journal of Science and Arts, Morton stated, “The facts connected with hybridity in the inferior classes of animals, have an important bearing on one of the most interesting questions in Ethnography.” Whereas Morton did not contend that human “mulattoes” were sterile, he maintained that their ability to reproduce did not prove the races to be one species of singular origin either. As Morton’s counter argument indicates, many scientists had made

⁶² “The Negro—Ovary Cells—Dr. Cartwright,” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:2 (April 1854): 38-39.

“hybridity the test of specific character,” arguing that animals of different species were unable to reproduce fertile offspring. For some, “sterile hybrids” were thus proof that the races were distinct species.⁶³

For Morton, however, the original unity or diversity of the races hinged less on the potential for reproduction between the races and more on the correct definition of “species” and “races.” “Races are properly successions of individuals propagated from any given stock,” Morton argued, “and we agree with the learned Dr. Pritchard, from whom we cite these definitions, that when races can be proved to possess certain primordial distinctions, which have been transmitted unbroken, they should be regarded as true species.”⁶⁴ Arguments for the separate origins of the races were best supported by the distinct and unchanging character of the various races over thousands of years rather than the reproductive capacities of racial “hybrids.”

Other ethnologists were not so quick to divorce the issue of racial hybridity from the origins question or to concede that mulattoes could themselves reproduce, but their arguments were similarly geared toward proving longstanding and permanent racial difference. In introducing his 1844 Two Lectures, on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races, Nott discussed the “effect of crossing races.”⁶⁵ He also thought that animals could shed light on questions of race, but he believed that the natural sciences had not adequately addressed the issue: “Naturalists have strangely overlooked the effects of mixing races, when the illustrations drawn from the crossing of animals speak so plainly—man physically is, but an animal at last, with the same physiological

⁶³ Samuel Morton, “Hybridity in Animals, considered in reference to the question of the Unity of the Human Species,” American Journal of Science and Arts, 3:7 (January 1847): 39.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 40.

⁶⁵ Nott, Two Lectures, 1.

laws which govern others.”⁶⁶ Elsewhere, Nott conceded that though fertile offspring could be produced from black and white parents, such offspring did not have the fecundity of its parent races and that over time it was “the higher type that in the end predominates.”⁶⁷ However, no amount of infusion of white blood could turn the black race white or enable a mulatto to escape detection, for the skilled eyes of Nott and other racial experts could always “instantaneously trace the Negro type in complexion and feature.” And why did the “higher type” predominate but never subsume the lower race? Nott concluded, “The only physiological reason that may be assigned is this: the mulattoes, or mixed-breeds, die off before the dark stain can be washed out by amalgamation. No other rational explanation can be offered.”⁶⁸ In a text that also offered an explicit defense of slavery—under which the sexual exploitation of slave women by their white masters was actually profitable—it was politically expedient to render racial mixture non-threatening.⁶⁹ Thus, Nott argued that the issue of hybridity was of considerable interest to ethnologists, but he dismissed the human “hybrids” themselves as inconsequential, weak and ultimately destined to die out.

Nott was correct that his views on hybridity in particular would stand out to other scientists. Echoing Nott’s assessment of the importance of examining racial mixture, an overwhelmingly favorable review of Types of Mankind first published in the Philadelphia Medical Journal and reprinted in the Georgia Blister and Critic focused entirely on the “detailed conglomeration of fact upon amalgamation” that could be

⁶⁶ Ibid, 16.

⁶⁷ Nott, Types of Mankind, 97.

⁶⁸ Nott, Types of Mankind, 399.

⁶⁹ Under slavery, slave women frequently bore the children of their white masters who, by laws in place in the United States since the late seventeenth century that mandated that all children born to black women

gleaned from the text. The reviewer included an excerpt from Types of Mankind that summarized Nott's critical conclusions on the issue for a wide audience:

- '1. That mulattoes are the shortest lived of any of the human race.
- '2. That mulattoes are intermediate in intelligence between the black and the whites.
- '3. That they are less capable of undergoing fatigue and hardships than either the black or whites.
- '4. That the mulatto women are peculiarly delicate, and subject to a variety of chronic diseases. That they are bad breeders, bad nurses, liable to abortions, and that their children generally die young.
- '5. That when mulattoes intermarry, they are less prolific than when crossed on the parent stocks.'

Also, that when mulattoes intermarry, there is a tendency in the offspring to revert to one or the other of the original stocks—some of the children for example, being whiter and some blacker than either of their parents.⁷⁰

Nott explained that he first drew these conclusions in 1842 in a short essay on hybridity in animals and humans and that while he remained convinced of their validity, he must now add an important caveat: they are only fully accurate as “they apply to the intermixture of the strictly white (i.e. the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton) with the true Negro.”⁷¹ Nott claimed that his experience living in Mobile and New Orleans, where the population included “a preponderance of the blood of the French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and other dark-skinned races,” taught him that mixture between these “darker” Europeans and people of African descent had far less, if any, effect on the fertility of the offspring than when Anglo-Saxons and “pure Negroes” mixed.⁷² Rather than disproving Nott's claims regarding the black race's separate origin, the more fertile offspring resulting from unions between blacks and non-Anglo Europeans simply drew

would inherit their mother's status as slave or free, would only further increase the master's human property.

⁷⁰ “Reviews—Types of Mankind, by Nott and Gliddon,” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:5 (July 1854): 112. The Blister excerpted this list of critical “facts” on hybridity from Nott, Types of Mankind, 373.

⁷¹ Nott, Types of Mankind, 373.

⁷² *Ibid*, 4.

the whiteness of the latter into question while reinforcing the common ethnological view that “true” whites and “negroes” represented opposite poles on the racial spectrum.

According to Nott, thorough investigation of racial hybridity in the United States was a complicated venture, and mulatto women both added to the difficulties and illuminated vital facts on the subject. Though his “circumstances, personal and professional, [afforded him] ample opportunities for observation,” for Nott “the difficulty arises solely from the want of chastity among mulatto women, which is so notorious as to be proverbial.”⁷³ He further claimed that “Although often married to hybrid males of their own color, their children are begotten as frequently by white or other men, as by their husbands.” Like many other slaveholders and ethnologists, Nott obscured the frequent sexual exploitation of black and mixed race women with convenient stereotypes about their promiscuity. While such alleged promiscuity may have prevented Nott from fully tracing the racial lineage of the individuals he encountered, it did not stop the intrepid doctor from going about his business of collecting anecdotal evidence regarding mulatto women as a group, and mixed race people in general:

For many years, in my daily professional visits, I have been in the habit of meeting with mulatto women, either free or slaves; and, never omitting an opportunity of inquiry with regard to their prolificacy, longevity of offspring, color of parents, age, etc., the conviction has become indelibly fixed in my mind that the positions laid down in the beginning of this chapter [above] are true.⁷⁴

The image that Nott constructed of mulattoes was a characterization shared by many of his contemporaries within and outside the science world.

⁷³ Nott, *Types of Mankind*, 398. By personal and professional circumstances, Nott is likely referring to his status as a slaveholder himself and his work in a medical clinic for slaves, which he co-founded.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 398.

In sum, antebellum ethnologists presented mulattoes as without purpose in nature—lesser versions of both parent races, and thus physically fit neither to rule nor to labor. Gender played some role in this alleged lack of purpose, for “hybrids” also did not fit the sex-defined roles nature had designed; mulatto men were weak and mulatto women were “bad breeders.” As we shall in the next chapter, similar arguments were applied by American ethnologists during the Civil War and Reconstruction not just to “mulattoes” but to black men and women as well. With emancipation, blacks in general would join “mulattoes” as deviating from the gendered schema of nature and being undeserving of the rights and privileges afforded their respective sexes, such as the franchise.

Ethnological discussions of mulattoes as weak, sexually compromised hybrids persisted even as the debate over polygenesis, to which considerations of hybridity were initially connected, waned in the 1860s. Van Evrie, for example, noted in 1866 that “there is always an imperfect vitality in the mulatto and mongrel verging to absolute sterility, and the fourth generation of the former is as absolutely forbidden to multiply itself as the mule in its first generation.”⁷⁵ So, too, ethnologists continue to focus overwhelmingly on the black and white races in discussions of racial mixture, for as Van Evrie describes, “As with all other genera, there is a certain capacity of interunion in the several human species, less, however, in the instance of Caucasians and Negroes than in other races, for these two occupy the extremes of the generic column, the former being at the head, and the latter at the base of this column.”⁷⁶ This common belief that blacks and

⁷⁵ John Van Evrie, *Abolition is National Death* (1866), reprinted in *Anti-Black Thought, Vol. 1: Anti-Abolition Tracts and Anti-Black Stereotypes*, ed. John David Smith (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

whites represented opposite ends of a racial hierarchy was in part why so much of antebellum ethnology in general focused on comparing the two races, rather than other races that were thought to be more closely linked.

Also noteworthy in Van Evrie's words above is his emphasis on terms like "genera" and "species" in relation to racial hierarchy, a clear indication that when applied to race taxonomy was never just about categorizing. Applying Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus' system of classification to race provided a way for some ethnologists to attempt to reconcile polygenesis with more traditional Creation stories. They claimed that the theory of the separate origins of the races did not fly in the face of the Bible because the races were separate species, and some did not fall under the category of "man" whose genesis the Bible describes.

Thus, from its scientific origin to its application to race in the nineteenth century, the systematic classification of human beings was never apolitical, nor was it ever gender neutral. In the eighteenth century, Linnaeus proposed a system of classifying all living things, in which each grouping was then subdivided along increasingly narrow physical specifications. Kingdom was the largest category, followed by phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. He situated the genus man within the animal kingdom, itself initially a controversial proposal. It inverted the Chain of Being that had long dominated popular conceptions of the natural order, as well as religious doctrine, by placing man not above animals, but among them. His categorization of man was controversial in other ways as well. As historian Londa Schiebinger demonstrates, social issues like gender were implicit in Linnaeus' development of taxonomy. His placement of the genus man within the class "mammalia," one of the few groupings to be defined by female

physiognomy (milk production) alone, had far-reaching implications, and its own share of critics.⁷⁷ Yet by the mid-nineteenth century, Linnaeus' taxonomy had been widely accepted in mainstream science and proved important in American ethnology. However, while the female of the species was used to differentiate humans from other animals by Linnaeus, in antebellum ethnology, it was almost always the male that was used to differentiate among humans in racial taxonomy.

Like the question of united or diverse origins with which it was often associated, racial taxonomy was framed in terms of men; it was male bodies and male pursuits that defined the parameters and character of the races. One of the most extensive antebellum texts on racial taxonomy, Types of Mankind classified the races by both physical characteristics and degree of civilization and barbarism. Among anatomical features like skin color and facial features, Nott also used male-specific traits such as beards and brute strength to distinguish between the races. Likewise, he viewed the world and human history through the male enterprises of war and domination: "Looking back over the world's history, it will be seen that human progress has arisen mainly from the war of races. All the great impulses which have been given to it from time to time have been the results of conquests and colonizations."⁷⁸

Linnaean taxonomy allowed ethnologists to try to cloak the ignominy of their claim that non-white races constituted separate species from whites as a matter of scientific semantics, that all races belonged to the same genus, man, but diverged at the

⁷⁷ Londa Schiebinger, "Chapter 2: Why Mammals are Called Mammals" in Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science (Boston: Beacon, 1993).

⁷⁸ Nott and Gliddon, Types of Mankind, 53.

category of species.⁷⁹ Nott was one such proponent, stating, “I set out then with the proposition, that there is a Genus, Man, comprising two or more species.” Still, he followed with a theological discussion where he posited that there were many separate creations of plant and animal species, so there was no reason for people to be so reluctant to accept that the same could be true of man.⁸⁰ He then went on to clarify his terminology further, defining species as anatomically distinct, and more importantly, synonymous with race: “We mean by the term Species, a race of Animals or Plants, marked by peculiarities of structure, which have always been constant and undeviating—two races are considered specifically different, if they are distinguished from each other by some peculiarities which one cannot be supposed to have acquired, or the other lost, through any known operation of physical causes.”⁸¹ Racial taxonomy—the number of races in the world, their geographic origins or migrations, physical and cultural features, and so on—then was irrevocably tied to the question of racial origins in antebellum ethnology. Though a major theme and concern of ethnology throughout its reign, racial taxonomy was especially prominent in ethnology prior to the Civil War for that reason.

Taxonomy also afforded ethnologists the appearance of being objective scientists who were simply providing names and order to the natural world, which included human beings. As noted previously, several ethnologists were even naturalists by training. By placing race within a larger context of other differences in nature—not unlike distinguishing between varieties of plants, for example—even proslavery apologists Nott could describe himself as a politically disinterested naturalist: “My object is truth, and I

⁷⁹ Linnaeus himself did not, however, view the races as different species of the genus man, but rather as variations within the same species.

⁸⁰ Nott, *Two Lectures*, 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 17.

care not which way the question [of polygenesisism versus monogenesisism], provided the decision is the correct one. I have accumulated a number of curious and interesting facts, some of which are new, and I have interpreted them dispassionately.”⁸² Nott’s confidence here is striking, especially in comparison to earlier ethnological writing. For example, in 1818 William Charles Wells, a Charleston-born physician educated in Scotland, conceded that his discussion of the nature and origins of color difference between the races was “a subject which admits only conjectural reasoning.”⁸³ Partly a difference in personality, to be sure, Nott’s confidence nearly thirty years after Wells is also indicative of the growing authority and influence of ethnology in American science and culture.

Linnaeus’ system of taxonomy presented challenges for racial scientists as well. Although he accepted his terminology, Van Evrie took issue with Linnaeus’ classification of human beings. Throughout his writings, Van Evrie frequently employed a common rhetorical device that characterized the races as sharing the same genus, man, but diverging at level of species. Thus, he felt “impelled to dissent from the classifications of Linnaeus, and those modern naturalists who follow him, not only as being untrue in point of fact, but pregnant with mighty mischief.” The nature of that “mighty mischief” was not that Linnaeus’ had “placed ‘man’ in the category Mammalia, but made him an order, a genus and species by himself.” For Van Evrie, this was no mere difference in organizational schematics, but rather a grave error that misrepresented the origin, character, and extent of difference between the races, and ran counter to the rest of nature, “For in the entire world of animal existence, there is no such fact as a single

⁸² Ibid, 4.

species.” Instead, he argued each grouping of life was further divided into numerous species. “These species, as already observed, differ from each other,” he continued, “They begin with the lowest, or simplest, or grossest formation, and rise, one above the other, in the scale of being, until the group is completed.”⁸⁴ In Van Evrie’s estimation, then, Linnaeus’ placement of man not only failed to take into account racial difference, it also failed to represent racial hierarchy.

Despite Van Evrie’s longstanding and vocal commitment to the belief that racial difference was immutable, he insisted that the term “species” be used to describe the races, rather than “permanent varieties,” a phrase which numerous ethnologists employed to avoid labeling the races as separate species. He accused such scientists, ironically enough, of engaging in semantic trickery to obscure the fact that the races represented distinct species; despite admitting “unmistakable” differences between the races, “a silly and strange perversity has prompted them to use the term ‘permanent varies’ instead of species,’ as if white and black were variations and not specialties.”⁸⁵

As Van Evrie demonstrates, racial taxonomy was a high stakes venture indeed. Furthermore, just as similar racial language could be found on both sides of the sectional crisis, the theory of polygenesis found an audience and support across the political spectrum, with articles arguing on behalf of the separate origins of the races appearing in both The United States Democratic Review and the American Whig Review. Notably, though, in each case such arguments were made by men and implicitly or explicitly targeted a male audience.

⁸³ Wells, Two essays, 439.

⁸⁴ Van Evrie, Negroes and Negro “Slavery”, 38-39.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 53.

“We are MEN”: The American School of Ethnology Attacked

Polygenesis was by no means universally accepted, within or outside the scientific establishment, but its’ critics though were just as likely to frame their arguments in terms of men. Chief among these critics were black intellectuals, who faced the daunting and unenviable task of developing a logical argument to refute the often illogical racist rhetoric of the day. In arguing for the shared origin of the races, they literally had to assert their place in the human family, as part of “mankind.” Employing some wordplay of their own, black ethnologists insisted that African Americans too were “men” in the generic sense of the word, but they also defended their status as men in the gendered sense of the word. For example, in his passionate abolitionist text, Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, North Carolina-born David Walker, the son of an enslaved father and a free black mother, posed a hypothetical question to “every [white] man who has a heart:” “If you will allow that we are MEN, who feel for each other, does not the blood of our fathers and of us their children, cry aloud to the Lord of Sabaoth against you, for the cruelties and murders which you have and do continue to afflict us.”⁸⁶ Turning back to the primary audience for his text—“colored citizens”—Walker appealed to their sense of manhood, querying “Are we men who have any spirits at all? I know that there are many swell-bellied fellows among us, whose greatest object is to fill their stomachs. Such I do not mean—I am after those who know and feel, that we are MEN, as well as other people.”⁸⁷ “Are we MEN!!—I ask you, O my brethren, are we

⁸⁶ David Walker, Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World (1829, 1830), reprinted in “One Continual Cry”—David Walker’s Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World: Its Settings and Meanings, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), 68. Three editions of Walker’s Appeal were published between 1829 and 1830, each with slightly different titles; the text cited herein is from the third and final edition. The capitalized emphasis on “men” is Walker’s.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 78.

MEN?” he continued, demanding black men assert their place in the ranks of manhood, while simultaneously criticizing white men for masculinity run amok. He declared that they have “always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority.”⁸⁸

The black ethnology that developed in response to the widespread scientific charges of racial inferiority in the nineteenth century also utilized masculinist language and male-centered arguments about race. “No man is any thing more than a man, and no man is less than a man,” avowed former slave James Pennington in 1841, in response to white claims of intellectual disparities between the races. Blacks, he argued, were “inferior in attainment” not as a product of their anatomy or a separate creation but because of racial injustice and the degradation of slavery in America.⁸⁹ Arguing for the shared origin of all humanity, as described in the Biblical story of Creation, black minister Hosea Easton asserted, “God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. Or, in other words, I conclude it is a settled point with the wisest of the age, that no constitutional difference exists in the children of men, which can be said to be established by hereditary laws.”⁹⁰ Like many antebellum ethnologists on both sides of the color line, Easton answers the “great question” at the heart of ethnology with reference to “nations of men” inhabited by “children of men.” Similarly, in the preface to the third edition David Walker proclaimed his hope that “all coloured men, women and children” would read his text. Yet on the next page he

⁸⁸ Ibid, 79.

⁸⁹ James W.C. Pennington, A Textbook of the Origin and History &c. &c. of the Colored People (Hartford: L. Skinner, 1841; reprint, Detroit: Negro History Press, 1969), 89 and 46. Quoted in Bay, 52.

⁹⁰ Hosea Easton, A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the United States, and the Prejudice Exercised Towards Them (Philadelphia: Rhistoric Publications, 1969, 1837), 5.

nonetheless addressed his Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World to his “dearly beloved brethren and citizens” and consistently referenced his “fellow men” and “brethren” throughout, indicating that Walker anticipated and intended a male audience despite any initial claims of wider appeal.⁹¹

Furthermore, like the white ethnologists whose racial theories they were countering, black ethnologists often framed the racial antagonisms in America as a contest of manhood and their own struggle for equality in terms of manhood rights.⁹² Walker invoked a list of male professions in which blacks were not represented, utilizing rhetoric similar to white supremacist John Campbell’s work two decades later. Yet Walker looked toward totally different ends, as evidence not of black men’s inability to hold such positions but as an indictment of the racist system that barred them from the ranks.⁹³ “Now I appeal to heaven and to earth, and particularly to the American people themselves,” he began, “to show me a coloured President, a Governor, a Legislator, a Senator, a Mayor or an Attorney at the Bar...show me a man of colour, who holds the low office of a Constable, or one who sits in a Juror Box, even on a case of one of his wretched brethren, throughout this great Republic!” For Walker, the destiny of a race lay in the opportunities and status afforded its men.

While white ethnologists endeavored to ground race in biology, black ethnologists emphasized culture and environment. Like their white counterparts, black ethnologists employed a mix of science, history, and scripture, but tended to read less into the corporeal body in their discussions of race. Particularly before the Civil War,

⁹¹ Walker, 62, 63.

⁹² See for example Bay, particularly 6, and 38-42.

⁹³ Walker, 63.

black ethnologists often proposed climate-based explanations of racial difference or conceptualized race as a cultural rather than biological phenomenon.⁹⁴ Largely eschewing the biological determinism that dominated white ethnological work, many antebellum black ethnologists pointed to classical African civilizations like Ethiopia and Egypt to counter white claims that the African had no history or capacity for civilization, and highlighted Europe's own barbaric past.

Within such arguments, black ethnologists like Walker and Easton often critiqued the white race as overly masculine, aggressive, and violent, and positioned blacks as a "redeemer race."⁹⁵ Though he echoed Walker's assessment of whites as a savage race of warmongers, Easton did not call upon black men to prove their manhood. Instead, he celebrated the feminine qualities he saw as characteristic of the black race, even personifying Africa as a "she," all the more notable since he otherwise relied on the masculine generic language conventions of the time:

Africa never will raise herself, neither will she be raised by others, by warlike implements, or ardent spirits; not yet by a hypocritical religious crusade, saying one thing and meaning another. But when she rises, other nations will have learned to deal justly with her from principle. When that time shall arrive, the lapse of a few generations will show the world that her sons will again take the lead in the field of virtuous enterprise, filling the front ranks of the church, when she marches into the millennial era.⁹⁶

Like white ethnologists, Easton presented the white and black races in sharp contrast, but in culture and ideals rather biology. Furthermore, Easton describes the black race as having the potential to ameliorate the worst abuses of white men, and to lead not by force but by example. In so doing, Easton invokes an argument that mirrored nineteenth-

⁹⁴ C.V. Roman, writing in the early twentieth century, is a notable exception, and goes into depth countering white ethnology's attacks against black physiognomy. In general, black ethnology became more engaged with the body as the nineteenth century progressed.

⁹⁵ See Bay, 38-74.

century discourse on gender, whereby women served as a moral influence and counterbalance to the more aggressive pursuits of men. However, as historian Mia Bay argues, black men like Easton redefined manhood to include more “feminine” characteristics.

Many black ethnologists drew heavily on the Bible to defend their shared humanity dating to Creation, as well as address the “Curse of Ham” argument that white ethnologists used to “prove” that black inferiority was inevitable and divinely determined. In rejecting their alleged place in a cursed bloodline, several black ethnologists constructed a similarly male-focused alternative lineage for the black race, tracing it to Ham’s other son Cush rather than Canaan. Indeed, regardless of how they addressed the “Curse of Ham” argument, black ethnologists described racial lineage as concerning the “children of men.”

Moreover, the argument by numerous white ethnologists that the black race perhaps belonged to the same genus as whites but constituted a distinct species was never a matter of mere taxonomical semantics for black ethnologists, or for the black populace as a whole, who were very much aware of claims that they were a separate species. Educated and uneducated blacks alike passionately and poignantly asserted their shared humanity and common origin with whites. Still, as Bay points out, in so doing, antebellum black thinkers were largely unable to escape racial essentialism and struggled to reconcile their own competing claims that the races were both different and equal.⁹⁷

While polygenesis remained controversial within the scientific world, even among white ethnologists firmly committed to racial hierarchy, the theory was met with

⁹⁶ Easton, 20.

greater skepticism and opposition still in mainstream periodicals aimed at wide audiences. This was so for a myriad of reasons, though rarely out of a belief in the innate or potential equality between the races. In 1851, The North American Review published a series of essays from linguists and scientists, including prominent defender of monogenesis James Prichard, under the umbrella title “The Unity of Language and of Mankind.” The issue was preceded by a lengthy introduction by the journal’s editors. Originally published in the 1847 “Reports of the British Association,” the editors of The North American Review chose to reprint the articles for an American audience because of “their bearing upon the vexed question of the unity of the human race,” an important and far-reaching question indeed: “The question of the specific unity of mankind is daily assuming more and more prominence in the researches and discussions of scientific men and scientific bodies. This unity may be regarded as physiological, psychological, or genealogical.”⁹⁸ The Review’s editors defended polygenesists against knee-jerk accusations of sacrilege and stated that their conclusions were based on legitimate science and sound logic. But ultimately, the editors came down on the side of a single origin for all humanity regardless of race.⁹⁹ For them, the proof lay not in physical science, or in any evidence that the races were exactly the same in moral or intellectual capacity. In fact, they argued that the races did indeed differ markedly by those measures, but such difference was a matter of degree and not nearly to such an extent to justify their classification as separate species, for there was much more difference between man and lower animals than there was among men across racial lines. Instead, linguistics, which

⁹⁷ Bay, 38-74.

⁹⁸ “The Unity of Language and of Mankind,” The North American Review, 73:152 (July 1851): 164, 168.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 170.

so many tended to write off as “dry and trite,” held the answer to the “vexed question of the unity of the human race.”¹⁰⁰ Like much of black ethnology, the Review deemphasized the body in the “vexed question” of racial origins.

“Are All Men Descended from Adam?” asked title of an unsigned critique of polygenesis published four years later in Putnam’s Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art. Men presumably meant all races of humanity and descent was traced not to Adam and Eve, but to Adam alone. Like “The Unity of Language and of Mankind,” the article in Putnam’s Monthly Magazine acknowledged differences in the moral and intellectual character of the various races, but argued that these differences did not prove separate origins of the races. However, “Are All Men Descended from Adam” did not share the previous article’s deference for the polygenesists as worthy if ultimately incorrect men of science, and proceeded to counter each component of the typical argument for plurality of racial origins.¹⁰¹

Other publications went further still, attacking not just polygenesis specifically but rather the teleological nature of ethnology as a whole. The popular periodical Scientific American, for example, opined, “It appears to us that modern Ethnology is something like spiritualism, neither of them are new subjects, but as treated by their students they develop many new absurdities.” It discussed Dr. McElheran, an Irish-born ethnologist residing in the U.S. who defended the often maligned Irish against ethnological attacks by counter-arguing that while all the races descended from one shared origin and the Celt was now the central type. The article continued: “It is a

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 164.

¹⁰¹ “Are all Men Descended from Adam,” Putnam’s Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art, 5:25 (January 1855): 79-88.

positive fact that every race thinks itself superior to all others; and the doctor, being a Celt, views all crania through his own peculiar vision. An Anglo-Saxon boasts of his race as superior to all others, while the Celt considers himself the model man. This pride of race is as old as the hills, and just as absurd as it is old.” Given the anti-Irish sentiment growing in the U.S. during this time, however, it is unclear whether Scientific American would have dismissed the doctor’s argument as absurd had he been presenting the Anglo-Saxon as the pinnacle of human perfection.

Offering a definition of race that diverged from the biological paradigm presented by most white ethnologists, Scientific American pondered, “What is a race? A people speaking a peculiar language and of a certain habitat.” Speaking in conventionally gendered language while engaging in a more radical critique of race, Scientific American nonetheless offered its readers a surprisingly insightful assessment of the limitations of ethnology. “At the present the German believes the Teutonic to be the model race; the Englishman and American believe the Anglo-Saxon to be the model type; while the French and the Irish boast of the Celt.” Moreover, hierarchies of men were ever-evolving: “The truth is, that virtue, bravery, and industry make a model man and a model race. These are the qualities of character, which in the history of the world, have elevated one race and nation above another.” However, “if such qualities were race peculiarities, then the nation first dominant would always have been dominant; the Egyptians would still have been the Prince of Men,” the editors added.¹⁰²

Another noteworthy critic of the American school of ethnology in general and polygenesis specifically hailed not from the United States, but Great Britain: Charles

¹⁰² “Ethnology, or the Races of Men,” Scientific American, 12:11 (November 22, 1856): 86-87.

Darwin, whose theory of evolution, while initially poorly received in America would later reshape American racial science. Though not publicly vocal on the subject of ethnology, in a private letter to his friend Charles Lyell, a British geologist, Darwin critiqued Morton's "Hybridity in Animals, considered in reference to the question of the Unity of the Human Species" and concluded, "I do not think Dr. Morton a safe man to quote from."¹⁰³ In another letter to Lyell over a decade later, he again turned a critical eye toward the American school of ethnology, positing "I do not think multiple origin of dogs goes against single origins of man...All the races of man are so infinitely closer together than to any ape, then (as in the case of all mammals from one progenitor), I should look at all races of man as having certainly descended from single parents."¹⁰⁴ His follow-up statement, however, indicates that though he did not share the American School of Ethnology's belief in polygenesis, he did share some of its language and belief in racial hierarchy: "I should look at it as probably that the races of man were less numerous and less divergent formerly than now, unless, indeed some lower and more aberrant race, even than the Hottentot has become extinct."¹⁰⁵

Ultimately though, debates over polygenesis versus monogenesis waned in American ethnology during and after the Civil War. With Emancipation came new ethnological concerns about the status of the freedpeople—and their claims to gendered

¹⁰³ Darwin-Lyell Correspondence (B D25.L)—Charles R. Darwin to Charles Lyell [1847. June 2]. American Philosophical Society (APS), Philadelphia, PA.

¹⁰⁴ Darwin-Lyell Correspondence (B D25.L)—Charles R. Darwin to Charles Lyell [1860. September 23], 7-8. APS. Between the two sentences quoted here, Darwin also wrote a parenthetical aside that read: "Agassiz's remark in Nott and Gliddon?? on coincidence of colour alone, so fleeting a character, does not go for much in his comparison of man and anthropoid apes." The two question marks could perhaps indicate he was not sure if Agassiz' comment was in Types of Mankind or Indigenous Races of the Earth, or New Chapters of Ethnological Inquiry, both of which were co-edited by Nott and Gliddon and contained contributions from Agassiz.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 9.

rights such as citizenship—and later evolution, and its frequent corollary, degeneration, became the dominant paradigm for explaining racial difference. Whereas one quarter of all scientific texts on race published between 1830 and 1859 were focused on the origins question (and many other texts addressed the issue in some way), the number dropped to 2 percent in the 1860s and '70s, and to less than half a percent by the turn-of-the-century. Nott provides an excellent example of this shift. In his 1844 publication, Two Lectures, on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races discussed above, Nott acknowledged his intellectual debt to his predecessors and colleagues, as well as his place within a genealogy of American polygenist thought. He then declared, “the question of the unity of the races is a grave one” and “not a question for mere idle discussion, but one involving others of deep Political, Moral, and Religious import.” Twenty years later in 1865, however, he penned a letter to the Superintendent of the Freedmen’s Bureau in which he referred to “the original unity or diversity of species” as a “mooted question,” and turned instead to the more pressing post-emancipation question of citizenship and the current state of the black race, regardless of how it had originated.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, ethnological defenses of polygenesis declined in the second half of the nineteenth century. But the “pride of race” identified by Scientific American certainly did not, nor did ethnologists’ tendency to view the body through their “own peculiar vision.”

“Beyond the Skin”: Bodies, Gender, and the Pervasiveness of Race

¹⁰⁶ Josiah Nott, “The Negro Race: Its ethnology and history,” a letter to Major-General O.O. Howard, Superintendent Freedmen’s Bureau, reprinted in the Mobile Daily Times, February 22nd, 1866 (originally written November 25th, 1865). In John David Smith, ed., Anti-Black Thought, Volume Seven: Racial Determinism and the Fear of Miscegenation, Pre-1900 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 10.

Though antebellum ethnology was characterized by considerable debate on issues such as the original unity or diversity of the races, the one belief most white ethnologists held in common was that racial difference was natural and pervasive throughout the body. This belief grounded ethnology and persisted in the field even as other concepts changed. Authors translated physical differences into mental and moral differences as well. In an 1842 lecture, Morton argued, “Some intelligent minds, influenced more, perhaps, by feeling than by reflection, are unwilling to admit these differences among the several races of man...Nor are these diversities confined to the physical and intellectual man; they are also conspicuous in his moral character, and pervade, in fact, every attribute of his existence.”¹⁰⁷ Likewise, in an 1857 article published in the New York Day-Book, Cartwright declared that race was not merely a difference in skin color—color which Cartwright opined was “not so deep in the female as in the male”—but infiltrated the body inside and out:¹⁰⁸

The blackness of the prognathous race, known in the world’s history as Canaanites, Cushites, Ethiopians, black men or negroes, is not confined to the skin, but pervades, in a greater or less degree, the whole inward man down to the bones themselves, giving the flesh and the blood, the membranes and every organ and part of the body, except the bones, a darker hue than in the white race.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, antebellum ethnologists such as Cartwright often determined that the physical, intellectual, and moral differences between the races were more pronounced in men than women.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel George Morton, Brief Remarks on the Diversities of the Human Species, and on Some Kindred Subjects. Being an Introductory Lecture Delivered before the Class of Pennsylvania Medical College in Philadelphia, November 1, 1842 (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, Printers, 1842), 6.

¹⁰⁸ Samuel Cartwright, Natural History of the Prognathous Species of Mankind. From the New York Day-Book, Nov. 10, 1857, reprinted in The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Chief Justice Taney, with an Introduction by Dr. J.H. Van Evrie. Also, an Appendix, containing an essay on the Natural History of the Prognathous Race of Mankind, originally written for the New York Day-Book, By Dr. S.A. Cartwright, of New Orleans (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1863), 45.

As can be seen in Cartwright's work, a mixture of biology, anthropology, comparative anatomy, and religion characterized nineteenth-century writing on race. When he spoke of blacks as "prognathous," for example, he referred to facial angle, specifically a jutting jaw. Ethnologists often attached this characteristic to people of African descent to illustrate their alleged similarity to apes, as seen in an illustration (Figure 2) from Races of Men [1850], by British anatomist Robert Knox. In contrast, his reference to "Canaanites" and "Cushites" drew on the Biblical history of the races.

The idea that race pervaded every part of the body remained a consistent theme in ethnology throughout its reign, often stated in nearly identical language over time and among different authors. In his 1866 tract "Abolition is National Death," John Van Evrie opined:

The difference [between the races] is uniform and absolute, fixed forever by the hand of God, and no human ignorance, folly, or impiety, can ever modify it to the millionth part of an elementary atom. The difference in the physical—the mere organic structure—pervades the entire moral and intellectual being, so that comprehending the former, we can easily measure the latter, or, in other words, the physical differences between the white man and the Negro, represent exactly the intellectual.¹¹⁰

Whereas Van Evrie's language here is nearly identical to Morton's thirty-six years prior, the similarity between Samuel Cartwright's words in 1857 and Daniel Garrison Brinton, a Yale-educated physician, editor of the Medical and Surgical Reporter, and professor of ethnology and archaeology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, writing in 1890, is also striking: "The coloration of the negro, however, extends much beyond the

¹⁰⁹ Cartwright, "Natural History of the Prognathous Species of Mankind," 47.

¹¹⁰ John Van Evrie, "Abolition is National Death" (1866), 4.

skin. It is found in a less degree on all his mucous membrane, in his muscles, and even in the pia matter and the grey substance of his brain.”¹¹¹

In contrast, Cartwright’s explanation of how race permeated the body invoked gender, but only to underscore the difference between the races of men, declaring “The black color is not so deep in the female as in the male, nor in the feeble, sickly negro as in the robust.”¹¹² Cartwright’s binary language implied a correlation between female and feeble and between male and robust, oppositions that reflect common nineteenth-century ideas about gender. But more importantly, for Cartwright, race literally seemed to be located more wholly in men. It was a concept that seemed to be accepted as self-evident in some circles, even when they called out for more evidence in support of his other claims. In an article that analyzed Cartwright’s theories on racial mixture, the editors of the Georgia Blister and Critic noted, “the genital organs are the last parts of the body that lose all trace of the Negro. The scrotum of the brightest mulatto is found almost black.”¹¹³ Strangely, while the article was otherwise about ovary cells, the editors did not follow up their example about the “almost black” scrotum with a corollary about female genitalia. Even when ostensibly discussing female anatomy, scientists were most interested in the impact of race on men. Moreover, here race was not simply more prominent in the bodies of men; it permeated the very body parts that distinguished them as men.

The idea that race pervaded the body, especially the male body, gave rise to a number of other themes and tropes related to racial difference. Furthermore, like the basic

¹¹¹ Daniel G. Brinton, Races and Peoples: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1901, 1890), 30.

¹¹² Cartwright, “Natural History of the Prognathous Species of Mankind,” 45.

¹¹³ “The Negro—The Ovary Cells—Dr. Cartwright,” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:2 (April 1854): 38-39.

premise that race was biological, these stereotypes continued to surface in ethnology even as other ideas waned or emerged. One such theme was the frequent comparison between African Americans and animals. Prior to the turn-of-the-century century, most ethnologists stopped short of declaring that African Americans actually were animals, but rather that they approximated animals anatomically more closely than whites did. This afforded ethnologists the guise of scientific objectivity, and protected them from charges they were challenging the existence of a human family. For example, in his “Natural History of the Prognathous Species of Mankind,” first published in the New York Day-Book in 1857, Cartwright wrote, “It is not intended by the use of the Prognathous to call in question the black man’s humanity or the unity of the human races as a genus, but to prove that the species of the genus homo are not a unity, but a plurality, each essentially different from the others.” The black race was “prognathous, like the brute creation,” Cartwright maintained, but clarified, “not that the negro is a brute, but a genuine human being, anatomically constructed, about the head and face, more like the monkey tribes and lower order of animals than any other species of the genus man.”¹¹⁴ Once that disclaimer was made, he then proceeded to discuss all the various similarities he perceived between blacks and simian animals, from the shape of their leg bones to the angle of their faces, repeatedly placing African Americans between animals and white men, in an early example of intermediacy, which would frame much of the scientific discussions of race later in the century. Echoing a common theme in ethnology, he argued that while whites, blacks, and apes were similar at birth, African and simian youth

¹¹⁴ Cartwright’s essay was reprinted in an 1863 pamphlet containing the full-text of the Dred Scott decision and an introductory essay by its publisher, John Van Evrie, The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Chief Justice Taney (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1863), 45.

then developed along parallel lines from which white children diverged. Moreover, Cartwright engaged here in a taxonomical manipulation common to the period, discussed later in this chapter, by proclaiming that the races constituted different species of the genus man, and thus all were human beings—albeit humans with naturally different characteristics and capacities.

Similarly, Van Evrie was also cautious to state that black men were not actually animals, “for the negro is absolutely and entirely human,” but then proceeded to marvel at how closely blacks and animals approximated each other. “Those things common to men and animals are much more prominent in him,” he remarked, noting “a certain resemblance between the negro and the ourang-outang...The negro, from the structure of his limbs, his head, etc., has a decided inclination to the quadruped posture, while the ourang-outang has an equal tendency to the upright human form.” He added that such similarities are perhaps not surprising since the orangutan is “the most advanced species of the simiadae or ape family, while the negro is the lowest in the scale of the human creation”; the body itself from the “structure of [the] limbs” to the head determined its place in the natural order. Personifying nature as a female as other ethnologists had done with science, Van Evrie offered a typically mordant explanation for how alleged similarities between Africans and animals came to be: “Thus, an anatomist with the negro and ourang-outang before him, after a careful comparison, would say, perhaps, that nature herself had been puzzled where to place them and had finally compromised the matter by giving them an exactly equal inclination to the form and attitude of other.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ John Van Evrie, Negroes and Negro “Slavery”: The First an Inferior Race, The Latter its Normal Condition (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1861), 96-97. Page numbers refer to the third edition (1863). Van Evrie first published this work in pamphlet form in 1853.

By the late nineteenth century, however, the language of ethnology was more likely to declare that the negro is a brute rather than that the negro is like a brute.

Related in some ways to comparisons between African Americans and animals was the frequent ethnological claim that blacks had a noticeable and disagreeable odor—a rather ironic charge considering what we know about hygienic practices in the nineteenth century regardless of color. In an early ethnology text, William Charles Wells described a white woman he examined who had one arm dark in pigment. From this case study he then extrapolated on the nature of color difference between the races by comparing her arm to that of a black man. Interestingly, Wells' text was published decades before Cartwright's work, and his rationale for selecting a black man rather than a black woman for comparison with the arm of his white female subject remained unspoken. Still, the nature of his experiment to test a possible correlation between pigment and odor seems to belie a tacit acceptance of what Cartwright later made explicit: that men most embodied the physical characteristics of their respective races. Indeed, cross-racial comparisons were usually between black men and white men, to show physical and mental difference between the two.

In a rather strange example of scientific methodology, Wells describes the experiments he and his colleagues performed upon Hannah West's arm and the arm of a black man for purposes of comparison:

[A colleague], who likewise saw this person once along with me, thought that the black arm smelt more strongly than the white. I made the experiment immediately after him, and thought so too. But on repeating it several times with more attention, I could perceive no difference. It seems to me, indeed, from a similar experiment made on the arm of a dark Negro, whose appearance did not lead me to suppose, that he had been very careful with respect to the cleanliness of his person, either that all Negroes do not possess a strong smell, or that this does not proceed from all parts of their skin, since I could perceive no difference between

the odour of his arm, and that of the white arm of [Hannah] West [the patient in question].¹¹⁶

The fact that Wells and his colleague both initially detected an odor when encountering dark skin perhaps indicates that they expected to detect such an odor, one of many examples of the teleological nature of racial science. That Wells repeated the experiment to test his own first impression is a credit to his attempt at scientific objectivity and his own reluctance to read too much into individual anatomy, admitting that the root and nature of racial difference was “a subject which admits only conjectural reasoning.”¹¹⁷ However, ultimately he did indeed extrapolate broadly from the Hannah West case, in an article that challenged some racial stereotypes and ethnological claims while lending support to others. While he argued that “The first [inference from the West case] is, that the blackness of the skin in Negroes is no proof of their forming a different species of men from the white race,” he later posited that perhaps immunity and susceptibility to various diseases is the best measure of racial difference and that the darker pigment of Africans may simply be symptomatic of larger developmental abnormalities with corresponding mental deficiencies.

Other ethnologists took the alleged odor of blacks as a given, and some, such as Cartwright, argued that a strong odor in African types was a sign of health and vitality, while also serving as a marker of racial difference. He noted that “When heated from exercise, the negro’s skin is covered with an oily exudation that gives a dark color to white linen, and has a very strong odor. The odor is strongest in the most robust; children

¹¹⁶ Wells, *Two essays*, 429-430.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 438-9.

and the aged have very little of it.”¹¹⁸ Of course, no ethnologist making such claims noted that African-American slaves were engaging in considerably more “exercise” in the fields under intense heat than their white owners or than southern physicians like Samuel Cartwright who made the above observation.

Cartwright’s language describing odor is very similar to his claim, discussed previously, that the “black color” of the “negro” was deeper in men and the robust. His prior correlation between robust and male seems to imply that this additional feature of the black race—“a very strong odor”—was also more pronounced in men than in women, a point he makes more explicitly in his “Natural History of the Prognathous Species.” Declaring this odor a product of “the most pleasant emotions,” Cartwright offered a revealing example, “In the dance called patting juber, the odor emitted by the men, intoxicated with pleasure, is often so powerful as to throw the negro women into paroxysms of unconsciousness, vulgo [sic] hysterics.” In true paternalistic fashion, Cartwright argues that the “strong odor emitted by the negro, like the deep pigment of the skin, is an indication of high health, happiness, and good treatment, while its deficiency is a sure sign of unhappiness, disease, bad treatment, or degeneration.”¹¹⁹ What Cartwright deems a mark of distinction between the races is something he attributes to the race’s men. So while he appears earlier in the paragraph to be speaking of the race in general, by the end he clearly means men specifically, as is often the case upon close reading of ethnological writing from this period.

¹¹⁸ Samuel Cartwright, “On the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:5 (July 1854): 110.

¹¹⁹ Cartwright, “Natural History of the Prognathous Species” in The Dred Scott Decision, 48.

Furthermore, although focused on the “odor” of black men, Cartwright also invoked common scientific—and cultural—ideas about women in his description of “patting juber.” Playing very much to the Jezebel trope of the lascivious black woman popular in the antebellum imaginary, Cartwright paints an image of women overcome by primitive, animalistic sexual impulses. They were captives of their wombs, like all women were thought to be at the time, but in very different ways—black women by unrestrained sexuality and white women by overpowering emotion, a binary between black and white and between lust and sentiment quite familiar to Cartwright’s readership. Indeed, these tropes about women’s nature would have been so familiar that they warranted no elaboration by Cartwright, who was far more concerned with differences between men.

Frequently, antebellum ethnologists, like Jefferson in the previous century, expressed general distaste for black physiognomy, arguing that African-Americans were simply less attractive, or less “perfect,” with few acknowledging the subjectivity of such claims. Hair, for instance, was an oft-cited feature that could be employed in seemingly contradictory ways to “prove” black inferiority. Longer arm length among black men than white was often interpreted as evidence of their closer proximity to apes. The natural extension of such logic would seem to be that more body hair would also indicate simian proximity, but white men’s greater abundance of body hair was interpreted instead as a sign of their manliness and their distance from brute animals.

Hair held tremendous importance as a marker of racial difference, but also of hierarchy, with white hair characterized as “perfect.” In an 1850 paper read before the American Ethnological Society, Philadelphia lawyer Peter A. Browne compared hair

strands of a Choctaw Indian (specimen donated by Josiah Nott), a Caucasian (none other than George Washington), and an unidentified negro, all of whom were male. Browne goes into mind-numbing detail about the shape, elasticity, direction, and pile of these hairs, and then declares that the hair of the white man has a central canal from which the hair's pigment comes, while the negro's hair has no central canal and the pigment is instead disseminated throughout the cortex and intermediate fibers. From this he concludes, "this variation in the disposition of the coloring matter is, as regards classification of pile, a more important feature than at first strikes the mind; for, according to the rules of science, one organ is considered more perfect than another, if it employs a greater variety of apparatus in the performance of its functions." For Browne, "The inference is irresistible. The hair of the white man is more perfect than that of the negro; as we know, by experience, that of all pile, that of the head of man is the most completely organized, we will not, perhaps, be wandering astray, in ranking the hair of the head of the white man as a perfect hair."¹²⁰

The relative perfection of white hair was not the only inference about race that Browne found irresistible. He also argued, "For these and other reasons, we are 'convinced' that the negro has on his head 'wool, properly so termed,' and not hair. And since the white man has hair upon his head, and the negro has wool, we have no hesitancy in pronouncing that they belong to two distinct species."¹²¹ Clearly other ethnologists also felt that the implications of Browne's conclusions were profound and

¹²⁰ Peter A. Browne, The Classification of Mankind, By the hair and wool of their Heads, with an answer to Dr. Prichard's assertion, that "The covering of the head of the negro is hair, properly so termed, and not wool." Read before the American Ethnological Society, November 3, 1849 (Philadelphia: Published by A. Hart, 1850), 7-8. From the College of Physicians of Philadelphia (COP) Library, bound with other ethnology tracts from the personal collection of Samuel Morton.

¹²¹ Ibid, 20.

far-reaching, for they continued to cite his work, most often as accepted fact, well into the twentieth century. For Browne and other white ethnologists, every feature of the body not only held evidence on racial difference, but also represented a microcosm of the scale of perfection in which whites always inhabited the apex. At least in language if less clearly in intent, Browne constructed a corporeal hierarchy of men.

Conclusion

The consensus among early racial scientists that race was likely more visible in male bodies was not the only reason for the overwhelming focus on men in antebellum ethnology. Scientists were primarily interested in the capacities and destinies of men, for indeed in nineteenth-century America the social, political, and economic position of a man determined the power and status of his family, his community, his race. White men could not lead if others did not follow; they could not rule if others did not serve. Antebellum ethnology lent scientific credence to existing inequalities, constructing a world in which men competed for power and the fate of the world rested on the “best” men winning the struggle—a struggle in which women had little role. In sum, early ethnology was by and about men, but “man” was largely an unquestioned category.

That began to change in the 1850s, however. When John Campbell published Negro-Mania in 1851, he stated in his introduction, “I do not say one word concerning the question of slavery, that is entirely foreign to the nature of my book.”¹²² The nature of Campbell’s book was a summary of ethnological work written up to that point, and while scientists’ discussions of racial origins and pervasive difference had undeniable implications for the justification of America’s “Peculiar Institution,” indeed many early

¹²² Campbell, 11.

ethnologists paid little explicit attention to slavery in their writings. To do so was increasingly uncommon in the 1850s and during the Civil War. As we will see in the next chapter, gender difference and reproduction were central to proslavery arguments. Thus, women began to appear occasionally in scientists' discussions of slavery in the 1850s, while their considerations of other ethnological issues—polygenesis, cranial difference, and racial taxonomy, among others—remained focused on “races of men.” The sustained and explicit defenses of slavery that appeared in American ethnology shortly after the publication of Campbell's book represented a deviation in theme and tone from earlier ethnology, but also differed from ethnological work on other topics during the same decade in regards to gender. The next chapter then begins with ethnological engagement with slavery and gender in the 1850s and beyond.

ILLUSTRATIONS

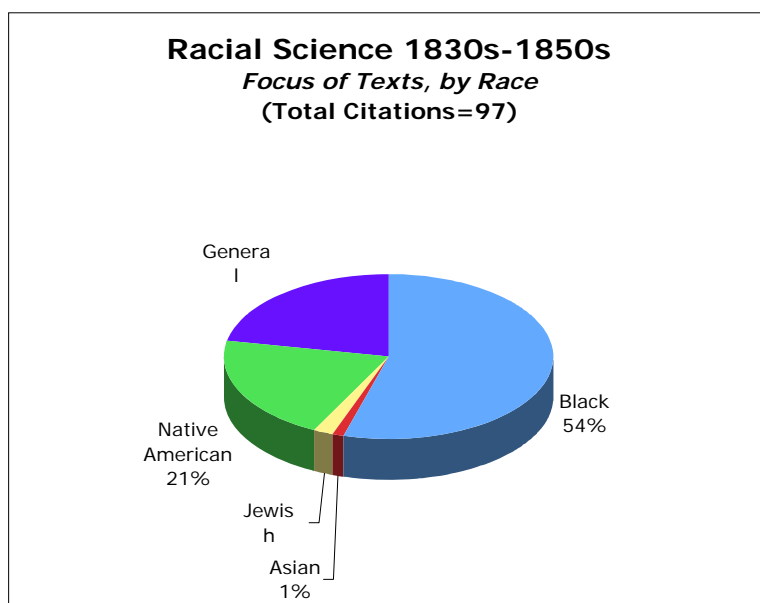


Figure 1.1. Focus of Racial Science Texts by Race, 1830-1859, Graph by author. Data based on the Index-Catalog of the National Library of Medicine; see appendix for methodology.

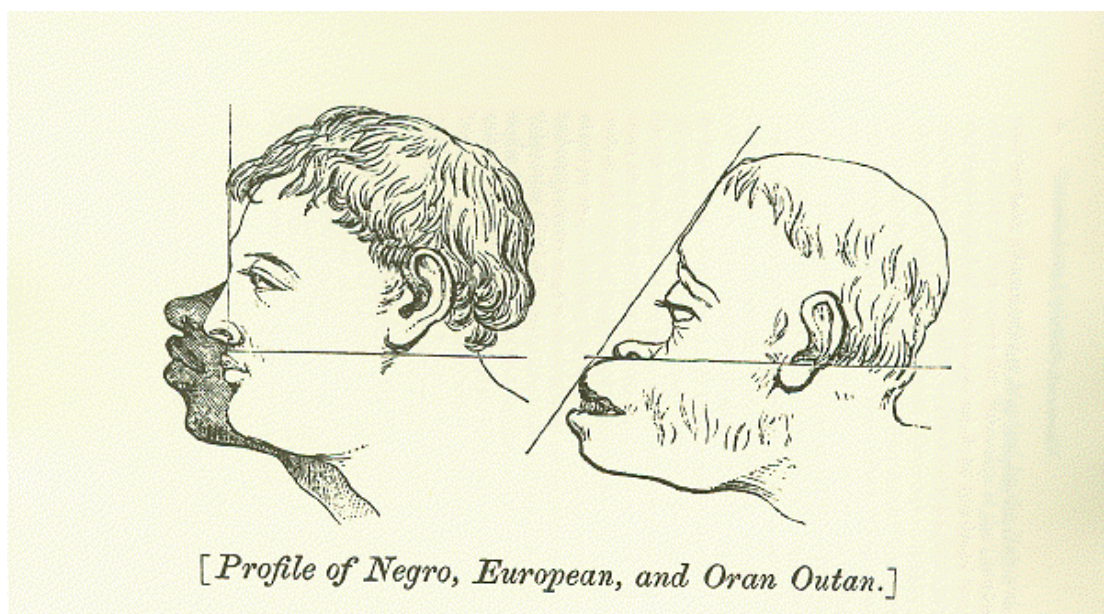


Figure 1.2. Illustration, from The Races of Men (Robert Knox, 1850)

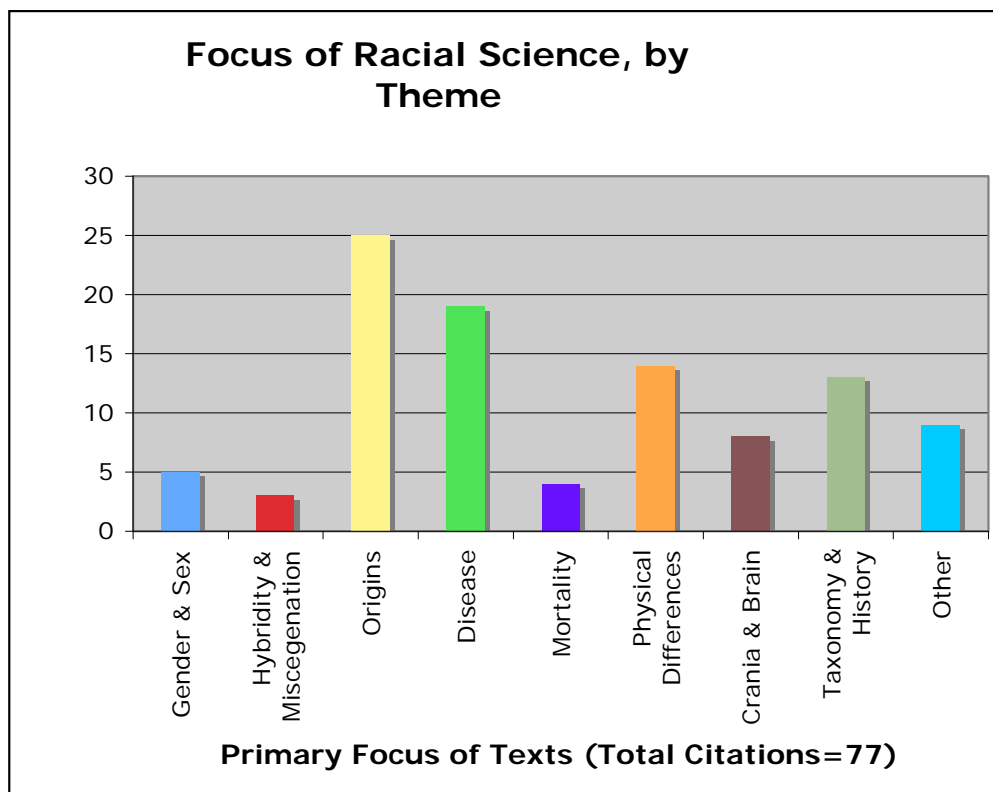


Figure 1.3. Thematic Focus of Antebellum Racial Science Texts, Graph by author. Data based on the Index-Catalog of the National Library of Medicine; see appendix for methodology.

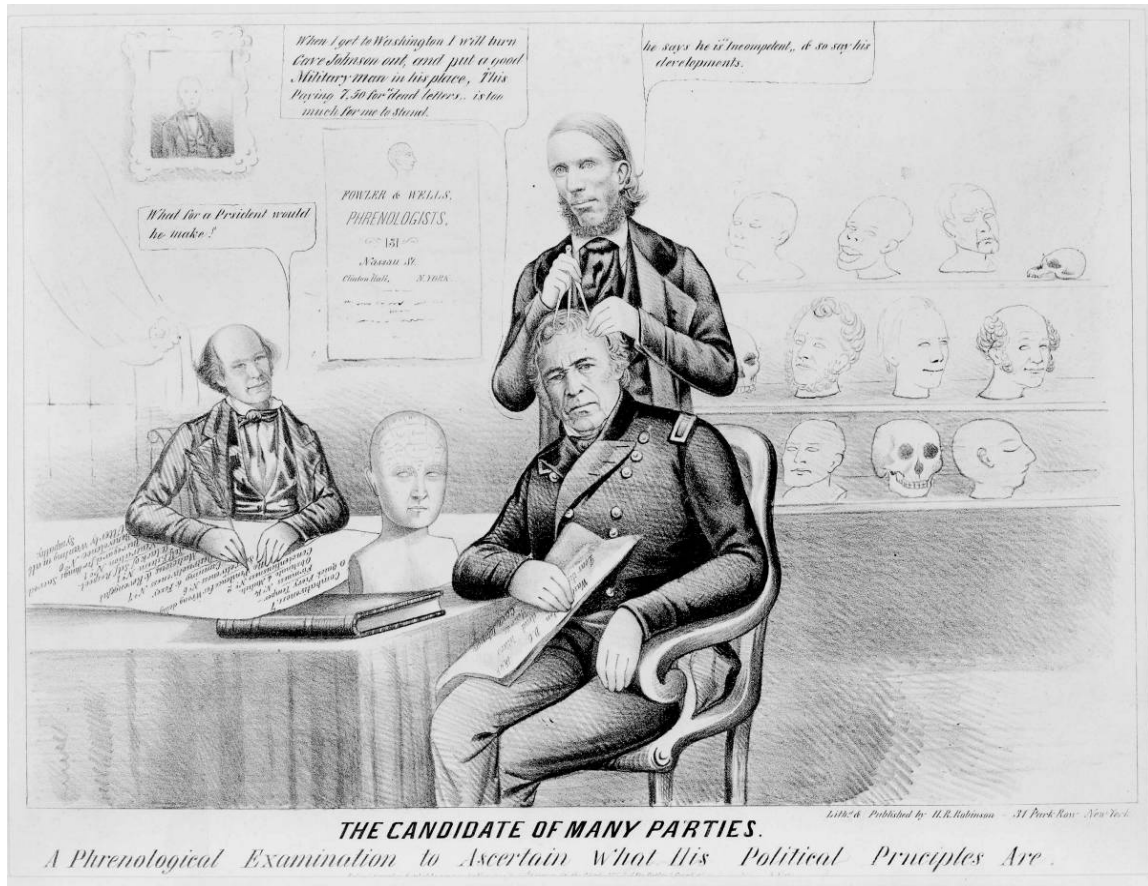


Figure 1.4. “The Candidate of Many Parties. A Phrenological Examination to Ascertain What His Political Principles Are” [1848], HarpWeek—American Political Prints, 1766-1876 (<http://loc.harpweek.com>).

**Chapter Two—An “Equal Beard” for “Equal Voting”:
Gender, Slavery, and Citizenship in American Ethnology, 1850-1877**

In his 1861 text Negroes and Negro "slavery": the First an Inferior Race, The Latter its Normal Condition, New York physician and proslavery propagandist John Van Evrie bolstered his claims about pervasive and permanent racial difference by invoking bodily differences of sex. “Like color or any other of the great fundamental facts separating races,” he wrote of black and white men, “the beard is sufficient to determine their specific character and their specific relations to each other.” He remarked, “We have only to apply our every day experience as regards this outward symbol of inner manhood to measure the relative inferiority of the negro.” Juxtaposing images of contemporary black and white men with their ancient counterparts, his book’s frontispiece used the beard as an enduring measure of racial difference and illustrated that such difference did not change over time (Figure 1). For Van Evrie, both physical manhood and its corollary, socio-political manhood, belonged to white men alone. In pressing for “equal manhood of the negro,” abolitionists were demanding of society what nature itself could not create—these ““friends of humanity”” might as well ask the black man to grow “the full flowing beard of the Caucasian.” The “outward symbol of equal manhood,” an “equal beard” would have been an “absurdity” on a black man.”¹²³ Black men were not truly men in body or mind and better suited to slavery than to any of the rights of men.

Van Evrie presented a similar argument about black women, claiming their bodies were not suited for the cultural trappings of womanhood. While black men lacked both

the intelligence and the skilled hands necessary for art, science, or anything but the “grosser trades, such as coopers, blacksmiths, etc., which need little more than muscular strength,” black women were equally deficient when it came to performing anything but the crudest women’s work. “The course, blunt, webbed fingers of the negress,” he maintained, could never “produce those delicate fabrics or work those exquisite embroideries which constitute the pursuits or make up the amusements of the Caucasian female.”¹²⁴ Whereas the bodies of white women were designed for the refinement of domesticity, black women’s bodies were better suited to the rigors of domestic service. And since their bodies failed to conform to white definitions of sex, black men and women alike could not be privy to the rights and protections attached to gender.

Van Evrie’s argument is representative of the gendered character of ethnology in the years surrounding the Civil War, a transitional moment in American racial science. Leading up to and during the war, ethnology became more closely linked to proslavery thought as well as more explicitly engaged with issues of gender and sex, a trend that continued into Reconstruction. These developments were profoundly interconnected in ways not yet explored by historians of race, gender and science in nineteenth-century America.¹²⁵ As demonstrated in Chapter One, prior to the 1850s, most American

¹²³ John Van Evrie, Negroes and Negro “Slavery”: The First an Inferior Race, The Latter Its Normal Condition (New York: Van Evrie, Horton and Co., 1861), 103-104.

¹²⁴ Van Evrie, Negroes and Negro “Slavery.” 121.

¹²⁵ Seminal texts such as George Fredrickson’s The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), William Stanton’s The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America 1815-59 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), Steven Jay Gould’s The Mismeasure of Man (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996, 1981), John Haller, Jr.’s Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), and Winthrop Jordan’s White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968) have made undeniably valuable contributions to understanding racial thought in nineteenth-century America and continue to be widely cited today. However, most of these key works that address scientific racism were written prior to the rise of women’s history as a sub-field, or to borrow a term from historian Joan Scott,

ethnology focused implicitly on men, but ethnologists frequently conflated the male sex with humankind as a whole when they spoke of “mankind” and the “races of men.” By contrast, Civil War and Reconstruction era ethnologists discussed sex-specific bodies, and sex and gender became central to their arguments about racial difference. Nearly invisible in earlier ethnology, women emerged as occasional subjects of scrutiny beginning in the 1850s. Moreover, although ethnologists continued to focus far more often on men than women in their discussions of racial difference, ethnological work in the years surrounding the Civil War began to interrogate the meanings of manhood as it intersected with race.

Several sociopolitical mechanisms precipitated and sustained ethnologists’ attention to gender and sex difference during this period. In the 1850s, a number of vocal ethnologists defended slavery in the face of growing abolitionist sentiment and increasing limitations on the institution’s expansion. These defenses of slavery frequently discussed the future of the institution with reference to black women’s capacities for productive and reproductive labor and utilized the gendered logic and language of paternalism common in antebellum proslavery discourse. During the Civil War, many ethnologists continued to vehemently defend slavery as the natural relationship between the races; but, with slavery’s demise an imminent possibility, they also began to consider the impact of Emancipation on America’s social and political power structure. After Emancipation, the question of black citizenship dominated Reconstruction-era ethnology, which presented

before gender became accepted as “a useful category of historical analysis.” The role of gender in ethnological understandings of racial difference, particularly during the mid-nineteenth century, is largely absent from these works.

black men and (white) women as sharing similarly limited intellectual and political capacities.

When ethnologists took up the issues of slavery and citizenship, discussions of gender as a category of difference became more overt and central in ethnology, as illustrated in Figure 2. The ethnological trend toward using sex and gender to explain America's racial order that began in the 1850s was well-established by the 1860s and 70s. Twenty-two percent of scientific texts on race published between 1860 and 1879 explicitly focused on issues of sex and gender, compared to six percent in the 1850s and zero percent between 1830 and 1849. Whereas twenty-five percent of antebellum ethnology texts were focused on the debate over racial origins, during the 1860s and 1870s ethnologists were far more concerned with the future of the races, in which gender played a crucial role; just three percent of racial science published between 1860 and 1879 focused on the original unity or diversity of the races.

With his overt use of sex and gender as markers of racial difference, Van Evrie stands in sharp contrast with earlier ethnologists such as Samuel Morton. But the changing character of ethnology described above can also be traced through individual ethnologists whose work bridged the antebellum through Reconstruction periods. For example, Josiah Nott's 1844 Two Lectures on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races, devoted almost entirely to the origins debate, made no mention of women, white or black, and compared the races according to more gender neutral characteristics like skulls. In 1854's Types of Mankind, Nott discussed black women, but only in conjunction with a lengthy defense of slavery. Finally, his 1866 text, Instinct of Races

took up the question of citizenship, questioning black men's capacity for both manhood and the vote.

The lack of critical gender analysis in discussions of scientific racism has obscured these important changes in ethnology over the course of the nineteenth century that in turn reflected larger transformations in American politics and society. While George Fredrickson has highlighted the increasingly proslavery stance of many ethnologists beginning in the 1850s, historians have not examined the impact of this development on gender in scientific considerations of race.¹²⁶ Indeed, historical accounts of racial science before the late nineteenth century have paid little attention to gender. Scholarship on racial thought at the turn-of-the-century on the other hand has examined the construction of black men as sexual predators during that period and analyzed the centrality of sex and gender in evolutionary theory; however, this scholarship largely attributes scientists' attention to gender to the rise of social Darwinism rather than an extension of earlier developments. The following chapter argues that American ethnologists' increasingly explicit engagement with gender was a product of political concerns over slavery during the 1850s and early '60s and the meanings of freedom and citizenship during Reconstruction. In so doing, it offers more than just a corrective gender analysis of racial thought, it also demonstrates that the line between racial science and politics in nineteenth-century America was thin indeed.

In the years surrounding the Civil War, science and politics intersected on questions of race, first to defend slavery against mounting attack and then to reinforce the traditional definition of "citizen" as male and white in the face of challenges presented by

¹²⁶ Fredrickson, 76-96.

women's and black suffrage. In addition to these shared concerns, racial science and politics also needed each other in more practical ways. Ethnologists publicly affirmed their social relevance by offering scientific expertise on the pressing issues of the day, while politicians used science to bolster their claims about racial difference and naturalize their policies of racial inequality.

“Like the Relations of the Sexes”: Racial Science and Slavery

As slavery faced new limitations on its expansion west and mounting attacks on its very existence from the thriving abolitionist movement, southern slaveholders rallied around their “peculiar institution” with unprecedented vigor. Ethnologists largely followed suit. The topic of slavery became nearly ubiquitous in racial science in the 1850s and remained so well after the Civil War, when scientists juxtaposed the natural order of the antebellum plantation with the disorder of Emancipation. The gendered rhetoric of paternalism, which framed much of the proslavery discourse outside the scientific establishment, often figured into ethnology as well.¹²⁷ With its plantation-as-extended-family metaphors and its equation of women and blacks with children incapable of understanding their own best interests, paternalism used gender to defend slavery's racial hierarchy. Likewise, interpretations and representations of human bodies, particularly sexed bodies, were also central to ethnological defenses of slavery. In fact, explicit discussions of women or gender in ethnology during this period often centered on the issue of slavery. Gender was thoroughly implicated in both ethnological defenses

¹²⁷ For more on paternalism and slavery, see Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 19-44 and 107-12 in particular; Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 1-149; Fredrickson, 43-70; and Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619-1877, Revised edition* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003, 1993), 93-168.

of slavery and ethnologists' considerations of freedom's perils that questions of suffrage after emancipation raised.

Scientists looked to the human body to legitimize slavery's place in the social body. Indeed, much more than aesthetics were at stake in scientific indictments of black physiognomy. The extensive ethnological comparisons between the bodies of African Americans, whites, and occasionally Native Americans did more than show how the races differed anatomically; they also asserted that those bodies were suited, even designed, for specific roles, namely, servitude or civilization. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that antebellum ethnology presented a uniform front on the issue of slavery. Some scientists, such as Josiah Nott, Samuel Cartwright, and John Van Evrie, vehemently defended slavery as the natural relationship between superior and inferior races. Others tended to avoid the issue entirely, though to do so was increasingly uncommon in the 1850s. Still other ethnologists directly opposed the institution of slavery, but for a multitude of reasons, few of which involved a rejection of the concepts of racial difference and hierarchy. Some of the ethnologists who critiqued slavery conceded that blacks were inferior but argued that the institution itself was either an abuse of power or an all too frequent site of human frailty and immoral behavior. Others wanted to rid the United States not just of slavery but of the slaves themselves, who they viewed as either a burden or a moral or physical contagion. And most poignantly, black ethnologists attempted to challenge the central tenets of the field in support of abolition and black equality, but often ran into the proverbial problem of trying to dismantle the master's house with the master's tools and trying to employ logic against often illogical

claims.¹²⁸ Moreover, even when an individual ethnologist did not explicitly support or even address slavery in his work, his claims about anatomical differences between the races could nonetheless be used by politicians or other ethnologists to buttress pro-slavery arguments.¹²⁹

Ethnological proslavery arguments generally presented at least one of three interrelated claims: one, that Africans had occupied positions of servitude and slavery dating back to antiquity, demonstrated by Egypt and Biblical lore in particular; two, that the very bodies of African Americans were designed for labor whereas the bodies of (male) Caucasians were more suited for intellectual pursuits; and three, that the social/political order reflected the natural order in regards to race. Significantly, the body was central to all three claims. The three most vocal proslavery ethnologists—Nott, Van Evrie, and Cartwright—each advanced the claims above and all relied on the body to support their arguments. In addition, all three drew on paternalist logic and rhetoric, in which gender was central; and black women appeared in their discussions of slavery, which was rarely the case in their more general considerations of racial taxonomy.

In Types of Mankind, Nott argued for a thorough examination of the history of the races and for Egypt's central place in such a history.¹³⁰ For Nott, himself the owner

¹²⁸ See Mia Bay, The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas About White People, 1830-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13-74.

¹²⁹ It is important to note that just as not all ethnology was explicitly proslavery, not all proslavery writing was ethnological. A number of prominent proslavery apologists such as George Fitzhugh looked to sociology and political theory to justify slavery, while others employed primarily economic arguments in support of America's "peculiar institution." But what differentiated ethnology from other proslavery writing was the centrality of science, particularly the natural or biological sciences.

¹³⁰ For more on Egypt's place in American racial thought, see Scott Trafton, Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth Century American Egyptomania (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), especially chapter one (41-84), which includes an in-depth analysis of Types of Mankind. On Types of Mankind's lasting impact on American ideas about Egypt and race, see Melani McAlister, Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), especially 144-145.

of sixteen slaves as well as a co-founder of a slave medical clinic in Mobile, Alabama, Egyptian history held the key to both the separate origins of the races and the inevitability of racial slavery.¹³¹ Both Nott and George Gliddon, in their individual contributions to Types, spent considerable time interpreting images from Egyptian history that confirmed, they claimed, that the ancient Egyptian was white and the dark-skinned African his slave. For Nott, the issue of slavery was intimately tied to the question of racial origins, for in his estimation not only did blacks have a separate origin, but they were also from the beginning of history servants and slaves, as if by design.¹³²

Falling back on a common paternalistic defense of slavery, Nott argued that if they changed at all, African Americans “became more intelligent and better developed in their physique” under slavery, due to their “ceaseless contact with the whites” and “the increased comforts with which they are supplied.” Although under the benevolent influence of U.S. slavery Africans “became healthier, better developed, and more improved in like manner by domestication,” it was a difference of degree rather than kind. Nothing could make blacks into something they were not.¹³³ Much was at stake, then, in ethnological discussions of Egypt and comparisons between the black race in the ancient and contemporary worlds: proving longstanding and likely permanent racial hierarchy, naturalizing slavery as the innate role of blacks, and divorcing African Americans from any claims to past civilization.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Reginald Horsman, Josiah Nott of Mobile: Southerner, Physician, and Racial Theorist (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1987), 130-31.

¹³² Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, eds., Types of Mankind 8th Edition (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1857, 1854), 246-71.

¹³³ Nott, 255, 260.

¹³⁴ Egypt was not central only to white ethnologists’ considerations of race, however. Black intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century frequently discussed Egypt as well, but toward totally opposite ends, to defend the black race and its origins. Egypt continued to have a central place in black racial thought well

With its focus on the past and racial taxonomy, discussions of Egypt more than the other ethnological defenses of slavery tended to focus on men. There were notable exceptions in Types of Mankind, however. On a few occasions in his consideration of Egyptian slavery, Nott interpreted the black female body. For Nott, black women's physiognomy also provided evidence of the permanence of racial difference as well as the "negro's" longstanding servile position. For example, Nott juxtaposed an Egyptian image of a "negress" with a Roman's description of his African female servant to demonstrate that her physical type had not changed in the interim (Figure 3). Like the earlier Egyptian image, the Roman text illustrated that "the physical characteristics of a 'field,' or agricultural, 'nigger' were understood at Rome 1800 years ago, as thoroughly as by cotton-planters in the State of Alabama, still flourishing in A.D. 1853."¹³⁵

Moreover, Nott's inclusion of an image in which the breasts of the "negress" were both prominent and exaggerated alongside descriptions of black breasts as "pendant dug" is indicative of ethnologists' growing interest in black female bodies in the context of the slavery question.¹³⁶

into the twentieth century and continues even today among some black leaders. On the role of Egypt in black ethnology, see Bay, particularly chapters 2, 3, and 6. While classicists have often ignored or dismissed claims by black thinkers that the ancient Egyptians were black, the publication of Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), by Martin Bernal, a white academic who made an extensive argument to the same effect, was anything but ignored. On the ensuing firestorm the book raised in academia, which continues today, see Jacques Berlinerblau's Heresy in the University: The Black Athena Controversy and the Responsibilities of American Intellectuals (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

¹³⁵ Nott, Types of Mankind, 255.

¹³⁶ As we see in historian Jennifer Morgan's provocative article, "'Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770" (William and Mary Quarterly, 3:54, January 1997, 167-92), such descriptions and images had a long history in Western racial thought, even as the context changed. Black women's bodies, particularly their breasts, were characterized as both animalistic and erotic and were linked to physical and reproductive labor as a means of naturalizing and justifying chattel slavery. Though these racial tropes are implicit in Nott's examples—and familiar enough to his audience that Nott did not need to elaborate himself—Nott's more explicit point was about the permanence of racial difference and the naturally servile role of black people.

Whereas Nott's Types of Mankind looked to representations of the body in history to naturalize slavery in the present, Cartwright read the bodies of living slaves to prove they were thriving in the role for which nature had intended them, an argument in which black women's reproduction often took center stage. Echoing Nott, Cartwright, a Louisiana physician, argued that slavery not only benefited the souls of the slaves, it improved their bodies. In this regard, Cartwright's work exemplifies scientific paternalism. That is, he maintained that the black race would die out if freed from slavery and thus southern slaveholders acted in African Americans' best interests by enslaving them. Cartwright devoted a number of his medical journal articles to proving Africans were not only more suited to agricultural labor in the South than Caucasians were, their bodies were literally designed for servitude.

Cartwright made frequent comparisons between black slaves and infants, both of whom needed and benefited from the care afforded them by their superiors.¹³⁷ His "On the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race" was first read before the Medical Society of Louisiana, then published in the New Orleans Medical Journal in 1852 and reprinted in the Georgia Blister and Critic in 1854. Therein, Cartwright drew a rather strange parallel between the allegedly similar sleeping patterns of infants and blacks "of all ages and sexes," who "instinctively" cover their faces with a blanket, their hands or arms, or by laying facedown, so that they re-inhale their own warmed breath. Notably, in such comparisons, black women and black men were not only indistinguishable from infants, but also indistinguishable from each other. In the

¹³⁷ It is important to note that not all ethnologists who compared blacks to infants or children supported slavery. Indeed, some ethnologists argued that slavery was an abuse of power, that it was precisely because black people were innately child-like that they needed protection from such exploitation. In other words,

nineteenth century, this was no trivial characterization; a man who was indistinguishable from a woman was no man at all, and vice versa. For Cartwright, the “universal practice” of face-covering during sleep among infants and African Americans of all ages and sexes was a sign of their immature constitutions. But while white infants apparently outgrew the practice after infancy, for blacks “the inevitable effect” of long-term exposure to their own carbon dioxide was “defective hematosis and hebetude of intellect.” One presumes Cartwright must have traveled extensively and suffered considerable insomnia to have had the opportunity to witness enough babies and African Americans in slumber to declare face-covering to be universal among both. Indeed, for Cartwright, the shared sleep habit “proves the similarity of organization and physiological laws existing between negroes and infants,” but the similarities did not end there. “Negroes...resemble children in the activity of the liver,” and “they are liable to all the convulsive diseases, cramps, spasms, colics, etc., that children are subject to,” Cartwright remarked.¹³⁸

Such claims provided scientific support for paternalist proslavery rhetoric. In the logic of paternalism, slave societies were ideally structured much like a patriarchal family unit, with the benevolent white male as the head of the household/plantation, overseeing his various dependents—women, children, slaves. He would extend protection to his charges and take care of all their material needs; they in turn would offer both labor and loyalty to their kind “master.” Cartwright argued that African Americans, like children, feared violence and shied away from physical pain. More importantly, he asserted, both were “very easily governed by love combined with fear, and are

racist paternalism could be used to attack slavery as well as defend it. More often in ethnology, however, such comparisons were made toward an overtly proslavery argument.

¹³⁸ Samuel Cartwright, “On the Diseases and Physical and Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:5 (July 1854): 108-109.

ungovernable, vicious and rude under any form of government whatever, not resting on love and fear as a basis.” Cartwright further argued that the slaves’ submissive nature was biological and innate: “Like children, they are constrained by unalterable physiological laws, to love those in authority over them, who minister to their wants and immediate necessities, and are not cruel or unmerciful.”¹³⁹

In making blacks “of all ages and sexes” alike in body and behavior, Cartwright placed the black race outside the gender roles idealized for whites. This was particularly true for black men under the logic of paternalism, for they could not themselves be patriarchs, only a patriarch’s dependent and loyal servant. The ideal—and physically “healthy”—black male in Cartwright’s assessment was not a man at all, but a submissive “boy,” regardless of age, who nonetheless performed the labor of the strongest adult man. Cartwright’s simultaneous construction of black men as child-like and brute laborers is one of the many ironies in nineteenth-century racial thought. During this time, childhood was increasingly idealized as a period of leisure rather than labor.¹⁴⁰ However, Cartwright’s work was very much in keeping with the gendered language of paternalism, in which African Americans of all ages were compared to children and denied naming practices that denoted respect. For example, another issue of the Georgia Blister the same year included a short piece describing the leg amputation of a forty-five-year-old slave

¹³⁹ Ibid, 109.

¹⁴⁰ Of course, the new, romanticized image of childhood as a sheltered time of innocence and play described the reality of only the most well-to-do families. See for example, Steven Mintz, Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004). Comparisons between black adults and white children also beg the question of where black children figure in. Southern planters and proslavery scientists often described black children as clever and energetic, equal, sometimes even superior, to young whites in intelligence. But as white children grew physically and mentally, the skulls of black children fused early, stunting further development, some scientists (including Cartwright) argued. On the status of black children under slavery, see Lester Alsten, “Children as Chattel” in Small Worlds: Children and Adolescents in America, 1850-1950 Eds. Elliott West and Paula Petrik (Lawrence: University Press of

“boy,” due to recurring infection from a snake bite twelve years prior.¹⁴¹ By constantly likening black men to children, scientists like Cartwright not only defended slavery as a natural institution that provided care for people unable to care for themselves, they also reinforced the equation of manhood and whiteness.

Cartwright argued that if treated kindly with their basic material needs met, slaves would have no desire to run away. His very biology demanded he love his master, just as his biology determined his submissive position and role as laborer. And indeed, I mean “his” literally here, because Cartwright framed this discussion of runaway slaves in terms of men, master and slave alike. This is not surprising. As noted previously, women tended to factor into ethnological discussions of slavery primarily where reproduction was concerned. Also, in reality male slaves ran away far more frequently than female slaves, since they were freer to travel between plantations and had less responsibility for young children.¹⁴² Lastly, Cartwright’s paternalistic argument about preventing slave runaways centered on blacks’ “natural” submissiveness, a point that would only have to be explicitly argued in regard to men, for all women were thought to be submissive regardless of race.

Part of the project of racial science was identifying the biological underpinnings of society. Cartwright insisted that if the master played the part of the stern but loving patriarch, “the negro is spell-bound, and cannot run away.”¹⁴³ Thus, he described slaves who did run away from “kind” masters in terms of pathology. Runaway slaves were not

Kansas, 1992) and Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

¹⁴¹ Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:1 (March 1854): 12.

¹⁴² See for example, Deborah Gray White, Ar’n’t I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South, Revised Edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1985), 70-77.

an indictment of the system, but a sign of poor treatment or poor health in the individual slave. The latter suffered from “drapetomania,” a disease that turned a slave “mad or crazy” and drove him to run away from even a kind master. Accordingly, “with the advantages of proper medical advice, strictly followed, this troublesome practice that many negroes have of running away can be almost entirely prevented.”¹⁴⁴ Other forms of slave resistance were also pathologized; “Dysesthesia Ethiopis, a disease peculiar to negroes,” referred to “rascality” among the slaves. Rebellious slaves manifested physical symptoms that correlated to their pathological behavior: “[Dysesthesia Ethiopis] differs from every other species of mental disease, as it is accompanied with physical signs of lesions of the body, discoverable to the medical observer, which are always present and sufficient to account for the symptoms.”¹⁴⁵ Of course, any “lesions” that covered the bodies of rebellious slaves were more likely than not the marks of the lash employed to return the slaves to their “natural” position of submission. The assertiveness and bravery that ethnologists lauded in white men as demonstrating their superiority was pathologized as a disease when enacted by slave men. Under paternalism, black men did not become more masculine when they acted like white men; white paternalists defined ideal black masculinity in terms of loyal and obedient service. Passing away in 1863, Cartwright himself did not live to see how many former slaves were suddenly stricken with drapetomania upon Emancipation.

While it may be tempting for historians to dismiss Cartwright’s views as absurd and extreme even among proslavery thinkers, the wide circulation of his articles suggests

¹⁴³ Samuel Cartwright, “On the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race (cont.),” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:7 (September 1854): 157.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 156-57.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 159.

his contemporaries thought otherwise. Moreover, the political implication and intent of his work is manifested by its frequent appearance in the Georgia Blister and Critic. The Georgia Blister was ostensibly a medical journal, albeit one with a decidedly political slant, as seen in the journal's subtitle: "A Monthly Journal, devoted to the exposure of quackery, the development of Southern medicine, and the diseases and physical peculiarities of the negro race." As such, it provides an example of science and medicine explicitly dedicated to a proslavery argument. While the Atlanta-based journal included more traditional medical pieces on disease and surgical procedures, each issue also featured articles that defended slavery through scientific paternalism. Consequently, this journal was the perfect venue for Cartwright's work, a fact not lost on its editors, Drs. H.A. Ramsey and W.T. Grant, who declared: "We wish we had more Cartwrights in the Southern profession—had we, the slavery question would, long ago, have been settled."¹⁴⁶

Central to settling "the slavery question" was the issue of reproduction. For Cartwright and other scientific paternalists, the fertility of slave women was viewed as an indicator of the health and happiness of the slaves and, by implication, the health of the institution as a whole. In the 1850s when Cartwright was writing, reproduction was also tied up with slavery's expansion—a topic of considerable debate in American politics at the time. With the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade at the beginning of the century and abolitionist challenges to illegal slave trading, the expansion of slavery depended on black women's reproductive labor. Faced with growing challenges to the South's "peculiar institution" during the 1850s, proslavery paternalists pointed to slave

¹⁴⁶ Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:2 (April 1854): 38-39.

women's fertility not only as evidence of their happiness but also to demonstrate that slavery could and must expand into the territories.¹⁴⁷

Cartwright repeatedly asserted that black women had larger pelvises than white women and that black infants had smaller heads than white infants, an argument that related to several other gender and racial stereotypes: that black women experienced little pain in childbirth, that white women in contrast were weak and frail, and that whites had larger skulls than blacks as adults, correlated to differences in intellectual capacity.¹⁴⁸ This fortuitous combination of biological factors demonstrated to Cartwright—and many of his peers—that black women were literally designed for reproduction.

Black male bodies did not escape notice in this particular argument. Their pelvises were also part of a general anatomical structure designed for labor—physical labor in their case, rather than reproductive. “Hence, from the obliquity of the head and the pelvis, the negro walks steadier with a weight on his head, as a pail of water for instance, than without it,” noted Cartwright, curiously adding that black men were similar to orangutans in that regard. The same could not be said for white men, whose cranial shape was designed for a different purpose.¹⁴⁹ For Cartwright, the white man's head was built to think and the negro's to carry loads. Furthermore, in one sentence, Cartwright managed to position black men as physically similar to both black women and animals, while anatomically and intellectually distinct from white men.

¹⁴⁷ On the contentious political climate of the 1850s, see David Morris Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (New York: Harper and Row, 1976) and George Fredrickson, The Inner Civil War (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 7-52.

¹⁴⁸ See for example Samuel Cartwright, “On the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” Georgia Blister and Critic, 1:5 (July 1854): 110; and Samuel Cartwright, “Natural History of the Prognathous Species of Mankind,” New York Day-Book (June 10, 1857), reprinted as Appendix in John Van Evrie, ed, The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Chief Justice Taney, with an Introduction by Dr. J.H. Van Evrie (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1863), 45.

In addition to interpreting black anatomy as designed for productive and reproductive labor, scientific paternalists also looked to fertility rates among the slaves to argue that black people thrived in the position of servitude that nature intended. The May 1854 issue of the Georgia Blister, for example, contained an article that compared the life expectancy and fertility rates of free blacks in Massachusetts and slaves in Georgia, with the explicit purpose of proving slavery to be beneficial. Summarizing the article's results, the editors declared, "the Southern slave is healthier, lives longer, and is more prolific, than the [black] people of the North."¹⁵⁰ High fertility among slaves not only "proved" they were healthy and contented enough to reproduce at high rates; it also showed that the slave system itself was successful, self-sustaining, and economically viable.

Paternalist rhetoric was just one of many approaches the ever-prolific Van Evrie employed in his diatribes against abolitionism and the black race. Often citing the work of Nott and Cartwright, Van Evrie defended racial slavery as the only way in which the black and white races could peacefully co-exist. He frequently argued that the sociopolitical order in the United States reflected the natural order in regards to race and gender. From the country's beginnings, "The white man was superior—the Negro was inferior—and in juxtaposition, society could only exist, and can only exist, by placing them in natural relation to each other, or by the social subordination, or so-called slavery of the negro." Chattel slavery developed in the United States not out of economic imperatives, but as a product of nature, according to Van Evrie. Paternalistic legislation and practices "protected the 'slave' from the vices or cruelty of the master, while they provided for the welfare of the latter and the general security of this species of property."

¹⁴⁹ Cartwright, "Natural History," 46.

But above all, these laws recognized the natural relationship between dominant and submissive races.¹⁵¹

Van Evrie's writing naturalized a paternalist ideology that was distinctive to—and largely a product of—the antebellum era, an attempt to reform the institution of slavery from within as it faced growing attacks and challenges from without. The sudden boom in prescriptive literature aimed at plantation owners, which extolled the virtues of an efficiently and compassionately run plantation, and religious sermons that preached about mutual obligations between slave and master represented a larger move to ameliorate slavery's worst abuses. The concept of slavery as an organic institution in which everyone inhabited their proper roles, ordained by God and nature alike, permeated political discourse and ethnological writing, particularly as the threat to slavery's existence loomed more imminent.

Gender played a central role in Van Evrie's representation of slavery as part of a naturally ordered society. Applying a gendered framework to the relationship between dominant and subordinate races, Van Evrie argued that slavery was as natural and inevitable as patriarchal families were in structuring the relationship between white men and white women, “for like the relations of the sexes, of parents and children, etc. [slavery] was inherent, pre-existing, and sprung spontaneously from the necessities of human society.”¹⁵² Ignoring the distinctions of race was as absurd as ignoring distinctions of sex, age, or species, Van Evrie maintained: “The effort to make the negro live out the life or manifest the capabilities of the white man, is like trying to force the

¹⁵⁰ *Georgia Blister and Critic*, 1:3 (May 1854): 64.

¹⁵¹ John Van Evrie, ed, *The Dred Scott Decision*, iv.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, iv.

woman to live the life of the man, or a child to exhibit the capabilities of the adult, or an ox to perform the duties of the horse!”¹⁵³ Echoing Cartwright, Van Evrie asserted that the black man could not and should not act like a white man; to do so was an offense against God, nature, and society. “Each one of God’s creatures has his specific organization and his specific life, and it is just as reasonable to expect a white man to be an angel as it is to expect a negro to be a white man; that is, to act as a white man, or to work as a white man.” Men and women of the same race could not be placed on equal levels or expected to perform the same roles in society, and this too was the case with men of different races.

Van Evrie buttressed his claims about racial hierarchy by juxtaposing it with the category of gender: “It is not necessary to enter into any proof in respect to which would be the greater evil, abolition of marriage in the North or the abolition of “slavery” in the South; the perversion of the natural relations of the sexes, or the corruption of the natural relations of the races.” Emancipating the slaves would lead to social disorder in regards to both race and gender, Van Evrie argued, ominously warning that the inevitable result would be interracial sex.¹⁵⁴

He was not alone in using marriage as a metaphor in political considerations of slavery. A political cartoon from 1848—the same year that the Seneca Falls Convention brought national attention to women’s rights and a short time before ethnologists took up the issue of slavery en masse—represented the political union between the abolitionist Liberty Party and the Free Soil Democrats and Whigs as an interracial marriage between

¹⁵³ John Van Evrie, Free Negroism, 2nd Edition (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1863), 7.

¹⁵⁴ Van Evrie, Abolition and Secession (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1862), 17.

Van Buren and an exaggerated caricature of a slave woman (Figure 4).¹⁵⁵ The apparent absurdity of the latter denoted the strange bedfellow union of the former. The slave woman towers over her soon-to-be husband, who cowers in fear and revulsion. Presiding over the ceremony is Benjamin F. Butler, who later served as a Union general during the Civil War and initiated the policy of treating slaves fleeing to Union lines as contraband of war, a policy that proved a vital step toward emancipation. The cartoon hinted at ethnological arguments that emerged in the 1850s and foreshadowed their introduction of gender analysis as emancipation loomed.

A well-known abolitionist text also demonstrates the free flow of racial thought between politics and science in the Civil War era, particularly on the issue of slavery. In the controversial 1857 book, The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It, Hinton Rowan Helper, a southern-bred abolitionist, set out to attack slavery from an economic rather than ethnological standpoint. Yet he nonetheless engaged key tenets of the field. Though not an ethnologist, Helper encapsulates many of the complexities and contradictions surrounding the slavery issue as well as the pervasiveness of ethnological thought in antebellum pro- and anti-slavery discourse alike. His animosity toward slaves second only to his hatred of slaveholders, Helper confounds conventional assumptions about the relationship between region and political inclination. As such, he also serves as a fascinating parallel to Van Evrie, a northern advocate of slavery whose ethnological pamphlets were unguarded political harangues. And like Van Evrie, Helper demonstrates the fluidity of exchange between scientific and political thought on race. After the war,

¹⁵⁵ The Free Soil Democrats and Whigs consolidated into the Free Soil Party for the 1848 election, nominating Martin Van Buren for President. "Marriage of the Free Soil and Liberty Parties," HarpWeek, American Political Prints, 1766-1876, <http://loc.harpweek.com>.

both devoted themselves to exposing the threat posed by a vastly enlarged free black population seeking political equality. Moreover, both men used gender in envisioning racial order—or disorder—an aspect of their work rarely discussed in historical scholarship.

Born in North Carolina to yeomen farmers in 1829 and finding little success in the California Gold Rush as a young man, Helper directed his bitterness toward the southern planter elite in The Impending Crisis, published in 1857.¹⁵⁶ Dedicating his book in part to “the non-slaveholding whites of the South generally, whether at home or abroad,” Helper posited himself as a friend of the white working man rather than of the slaves. The purpose of The Impending Crisis was not “to display any special friendliness or sympathy for the blacks,” he noted. This would prove an understatement when he published a pair of virulently anti-black books—Nojoque (1867) and The Negroes in Negroland (1868)—during Reconstruction that called for ridding the U.S. of the black race entirely. But even before the Civil War, his vision of abolition entailed the removal of the slaves themselves.¹⁵⁷ His primary concern in The Impending Crisis, however, was in overturning the hierarchical class system that he insisted was retarding the economic progress and development of the South, disproportionately harming the white majority of small farmers to which he belonged. Interestingly, he opened his first chapter by distancing himself from ethnological arguments, stating, “It is not our intention in this

¹⁵⁶ George M. Fredrickson, “Hinton Rowan Helper,” in American National Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁷ Hinton Rowan Helper, The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It, Ed. Earl Schenck Miers (New York: Collier Books, 1963, 1857), 19.

chapter to enter into an elaborate ethnographical essay, to establish peculiarities of difference, mental, moral, and physical, in the great family of mankind.”¹⁵⁸

Rejecting the ubiquitous argument by Cartwright and other ethnologists that blacks were more tolerant of labor in the southern heat, Helper pointed out that poor whites toiling in fields across the South were living evidence to the contrary, and used Josiah Nott’s own mortality statistics of black Southerners to the same effect.¹⁵⁹

Countering the frequent claim that slavery was simply an extension of the natural order, Helper played on the gender ideals of the era, by which white women were ideologically defined in opposition to work and thought incapable of manual labor. Yet the class relations created by slavery enabled an offense against the natural order. This offense was embodied by white women toiling in the fields to ensure the subsistence of their non-slaveholding families under the plantation class system. “Too hot in the South for white men! It is not too hot for white women,” he declared. “Time and again, in different counties in North Carolina, have we seen the poor white wife of the poor white husband, following him in the harvest-field from morning till night,” he continued. Helper then added an even more potent image to the mix, two white women residing near his mother who were forced by economic necessity to “hire themselves out” during harvest season, the double meaning of which further drove home his point about the degradation of (white) women.

Whereas many ethnologists argued that slavery upheld the natural order of race, Helper countered that it subverted the natural order of gender. Appealing to the manhood of his white southern brethren to prevent such an atrocity, he proclaimed, “That any

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 25.

respectable man—any man with a heart or soul in his composition—can look upon these poor toiling white women without feeling indignant at that accursed system of slavery which has entailed upon them the miseries of poverty, ignorance, and degradation, we shall not do ourself [sic] the violence to believe.” Ironically, he then asserted that these white women would be better suited to work in cotton mills and factories, the very labor from which some reformers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were trying to protect women: “We want to see no more plowing, or hoeing, or raking, or grain-binding, by white women in the Southern States; employment in the cotton-mills and other factories would be far more profitable and congenial to them, and this they shall have within a short period after slavery shall have been abolished.”¹⁶⁰ For Helper, writing in the 1850s, white women and labor served a rhetorical function in both his indictment of the agrarian South under slavery and his vision of an industrialized South after abolition.

During that volatile decade, some legislators were seeking to limit slavery’s expansion while abolitionists increasingly pressed for immediate and universal emancipation throughout the United States. As we have seen, in response growing numbers of ethnologists rallied to defend slavery from mounting attack. Slave reproduction, which advocates viewed as a sign of the institution’s viability after the close of the transatlantic slave trade, was imperative to such defenses and to the contentious issue of its expansion into the territories. Along with the logic of paternalism, prevalent in both political and ethnological discourse on slavery, this attention to reproduction precipitated a new focus on gender among racial scientists. Then, as slavery came under more imminent attack and proslavery arguments grew more strident during

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 256-57.

the Civil War, many ethnologists began to anticipate slavery's demise and tried to envision the impact of abolition on the U.S. racial order. Their predictions were grim: emancipation would result in dangerous social upheaval. Offering implicit counsel against emancipation, white ethnologists largely concurred that even if African Americans were no longer slaves, they did not have the mental or moral capacity to be citizens.

After the war, Helper turned his criticism from slavery to the former slaves themselves and found that ethnology offered powerful evidence that the freedmen should never be given social or political equality in America. For Helper and the ethnologists he cited, white women served a new function after Emancipation as a point of comparison with black men. Arguing that black men and white women shared similarly limited intellectual capacities, both Helper and Reconstruction-era ethnologists insisted that neither deserved the franchise which should be reserved for white men alone. The project of defining—and redefining—what manhood meant and how it could be measured along racial lines began during the Civil War, however, with a series of large-scale and influential anthropometric studies commissioned by the U.S. Army that provided post-bellum ethnologists an array of data with which to validate their claims about race.

Measuring Manhood in the Civil War

With the possibility of a vastly enlarged free black population imminent during the Civil War, black capacities for both manhood and political agency became major issues. By the onset of the war, the majority of white ethnologists were engaged in an explicit and impassioned defense of slavery that also anticipated the potential

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 254-55.

consequences of slavery's demise. As we have seen above, ethnological defenses of slavery in the 1850s and early 60s occasionally discussed women, particularly slave women's fertility as indicative of the health of the institution overall. But ethnologists' vision of American society without slavery was one in which men alone took center stage. Wrapped up in the issue of slavery's abolition were questions about what would or should happen to the former slaves. Newly freed black men, however, would present far greater challenges to U.S. social, economic, and political institutions than black women, who would already be excluded from or rendered largely invisible in these domains on account of their gender. If no longer slaves, did black men have the capacity to be citizens? White ethnologists debated this question, with most answering a resounding "no." And if black men's bodies and minds alike made them fit only for servitude, as many ethnologists themselves had argued, the potential competition for work and wages presented by a newly free race of born laborers would be tremendous. Thus, what emerged in racial science during the war, even before Emancipation had actually occurred, was a vision of race relations in the United States as a contest over manhood. Historian Reid Mitchell describes the Civil War as a national rite of passage into manhood, noting that "the very ideas of man, soldier, and citizen were inextricably linked." Indeed, "remaining a civilian was thought unmanly; going to war a proof of manhood," he writes.¹⁶¹ Prompted by trends in racial science as well as these popular links between service in the Civil War and manliness, army scientists began to critically examine what manhood meant and how it could be measured scientifically and compared along racial lines.

¹⁶¹ Reid Mitchell, The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home (New York: Oxford University

And measure they did, quite literally. Anthropometrics, which measured the dimensions and proportions of living human bodies, came of age in the Civil War era. Though not new, anthropometric studies greatly expanded in scope and visibility during the Civil War. Moreover, the impact of the anthropometric studies conducted during the war resonated in the scientific world for half a century. In an 1860 article in the American Journal of Science and Arts, Joseph Barnard Davis, a British physician who shared Samuel Morton's passion for collecting skulls of various races, argued that racial comparisons relied too often on anecdotal observation and that more precise studies tended to focus on only one measure or body part. In addition, the methods and tools for measuring the bodies were often not uniform, which posed additional challenges for racial comparison.¹⁶² Nonetheless, he remarked, "That great diversities, capable of metrical appreciation, prevail among human races is very well known."¹⁶³ Thus Davis called for a "more systematic and comprehensive" study of anthropometry.¹⁶⁴ It was a call that was heeded in earnest during the Civil War, most extensively by the United States Army.

The army entered the scientific debate over racial capacities and manhood under the auspices of the Provost-Marshal-General's Bureau of the War Department and the Sanitary Commission, which conducted separate anthropometric studies of Union

Press, 1993), 4.

¹⁶² Joseph Barnard Davis, "On the Method of Measurements, as a diagnostic means of distinguishing Human Races, adopted by Drs. Scherzer and Schwarz, in the Austrian circumnavigatory Expedition of the 'Novara,'" The American Journal of Science and Arts, 29:2 (May 1860). It is also worth noting that The American Journal of Science and Arts was affiliated with Louis Agassiz, the Swiss-born Harvard scientist and outspoken proponent of polygenism. Though not one of the journal's primary editors, Agassiz was listed on the title page of the journal, under an "in connection with" byline.

¹⁶³ Davis, 330.

¹⁶⁴ Davis, 329.

soldiers.¹⁶⁵ Both divisions generated enormous amounts of data on height, limb length, head circumference, and facial angle (that perennial favorite marker of racial difference in ethnology), among other categories. This data was then arranged by race or ethnicity, with white men as the normative standard by which others were measured. This white normativity was sometimes quite explicit in the Civil War studies. For example, the Sanitary Commission's guidelines instructed physicians to ascertain the "apparent intelligence" of each soldier they examined, indicating in their report "Very low, Low, Average, Quick, etc.;--the ordinary white private soldier being taken as the standard of comparison."¹⁶⁶ The paradigm of white male normativity was one of many features the Civil War anthropometric studies shared with the larger endeavor of racial science, despite the former's apparent attempts at scientifically precise, objective measurement.

The army had more immediate concerns driving its anthropometric research than many ethnologists working outside the military context who were considering the history of the races and what would happen to them in the future should slavery be abolished. For one, the decades immediately prior to the war had seen a steady increase of immigrants to the United States, primarily from the working classes of England, Ireland, and Germany. Faced with growing numbers of new residents, American leaders debated over citizenship and to whom, and when, "manhood rights" should be extended. Likewise, with nativism on the rise throughout U.S. culture, military leaders wondered whether native-born American men were better suited physically for military service and

¹⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion of the origins of the anthropometric studies by both the Sanitary Commission and Provost-Marshal-General's Bureau, the tensions between the two organizations, and their methodologies, see John S. Haller, Jr. Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 19-34.

more mentally and morally committed to fight for the cause.¹⁶⁷ As a result, anthropometric data was generally arranged not just by race but also by nativity, or place of birth, to develop a physical portrait of the average soldier, and by extension, the ideal soldier and the best man. Also among the military's immediate concerns was the contentious issue of whether to allow black men to serve in the Union Army. Banned from service at the beginning of the Civil War, free blacks lobbied for the right to enlist from 1861 onward while ever-growing numbers of slaves escaped to Union lines. Faced with a growing shortage of white volunteers as the war progressed and a glut of contraband slaves eager to fight for their own freedom, Union officers and Abraham Lincoln ultimately reversed the ban. In 1862, Congress authorized enlistment of black men in "any military or naval service that they may be found competent."¹⁶⁸ Questions still remained, however, about what kind of soldier the black man would make and whether he had the physical and moral capacity to serve in combat positions.¹⁶⁹

All of these questions and concerns fueled the Union Army's anthropometric studies. However, the scientists involved in these studies did not see their work as relevant only to the specific needs and concerns of the military, but rather as part of a larger ethnological project in the United States. For example, "to give as wide usefulness

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin Apthorp Gould, ed. United States Sanitary Commission Memoirs—Volume 2, Statistical: Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers (New York: Published for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, by Hurd and Houghton, 1869), 227.

¹⁶⁷ The Provost-Marshal-General's Bureau, for example, listed the nationalities represented among Union soldiers in the introduction to its report for "curious" readers. And as discussed later in this chapter, the Bureau sent questionnaires to all the physicians who examined soldiers for military service; among the questions was "What nationality presents the greatest physical aptitude for military service?" See J.H. Baxter, Statistics, medical and anthropological, of the Provost-Marshal-General's Bureau, derived from records of the examination for military service in the armies of the United States during the late war of the rebellion, Volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), 13, 169. In their questionnaire responses, the physicians often elaborated at length on how and why each nationality fought in the war.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Haller, 21.

as possible to these researches in their ethnological relations,” the Sanitary Commission distributed the anthropological apparatus it used to measure soldiers to “various institutions of learning in the United States” and supplied “scientific travelers” with copies of the forms and instructions provided to the Commission’s own scientists.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the chain of influence was not one-sided. Not only did the anthropometric studies of soldiers during the Civil War influence ethnologists for decades after, the studies themselves cited prior ethnological work and were shaped by existing scientific ideas about race. Benjamin Gould of the Sanitary Commission, for instance, sought “consultation with friends whose pursuits are of an anthropological or physiological nature,” including Swiss-born naturalist Louis Agassiz, an outspoken proponent of polygenesis and key figure in the American school of ethnology.¹⁷¹ The Provost-Marshall-General’s Bureau and Sanitary Commission scientists then assessed the various races’ physical, mental, and moral fitness for military service based on prevailing ethnological conclusions on racial difference as well as on their own anthropometric and medical data.

The Provost-Marshall-General’s Bureau, under the direction of the Secretary of War, published a two-volume set in 1875 containing hundreds of pages of anthropometric measurements taken during the war, beginning in 1861. The results were compiled into tables comparing men by race, region, occupation, nativity, and age. The aptly titled Statistics, Medical and Anthropological, of the Provost-Marshall-General’s Bureau, derived from records of the examination for military service in the armies of the United

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of paternalistic attitudes toward black soldiers among white (non-medical) military officials, see Mitchell, The Vacant Chair, 55-69.

¹⁷⁰ Gould, 231.

¹⁷¹ Gould, 221.

States during the late war of the rebellion clearly intended to appeal to a wide audience.

To a greater degree than the Sanitary Commission, the Bureau made conscious efforts to make their reports comprehensible for the non-specialist. “It is well known that statistics, when presented in a form requiring from the reader much study or computation, fail to be interesting or beneficial except to a very few advanced students of the subject,” the introduction read.¹⁷²

The Bureau’s study aimed to speak to the average man, because it was precisely the male “masses” that the study sought to define and understand. Their statistical data did not “relate to soldiers already in the service—picked men, in no wise representing the masses—but to the people.” The enlisting masses represented “men engaged in every occupation; the professional man and the man of letters, the trader, the merchant, the clerk, the artisan, and the unskilled laborer; the rich man and the poor man; the robust and the crippled.” The army’s subjects were “in short...the citizens of the United States, both native and foreign-born,” who would “illustrate the physical aptitude of the nation for military service.”¹⁷³ Of course, not all individual men shared the same physical aptitude, and army scientists intended to determine whether patterns emerged among racial types. As a result, comparison was central to the study and to anthropometrics in general. Investigator J.H. Baxter explained, “The tables in which nativity is an element of the comparison show the physical condition of foreign-born citizens of various nativities in relation to each other and in relation to native Americans, both white and colored.”¹⁷⁴

In reality, however, these tables broke native-born Americans into three categories—

¹⁷² J.H. Baxter, Statistics, medical and anthropological, of the Provost-Marshall-General’s Bureau, derived from records of the examination for military service in the armies of the United States during the late war of the rebellion, Volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), V.

¹⁷³ Baxter, Vol. 1, VI.

“Colored,” “Indian,” and “White”—as seen in Figure 5, a chart detailing incidence rates of syphilis, which is representative of other tables in the study in its arrangement and comparison of data. Baxter’s earlier omission of “Indians” is revealing. Though “Indians” are included in the tables themselves as a distinct sub-category of native-born Americans, much of the accompanying discussions of race were literally black and white.

The army’s concern with race in their search for the “average man” was further demonstrated by a revealing quotation selected to introduce and frame the first chapter, which reviewed the tables and their results: “If we are to devote our attention, before all things, to what can be measured and weighed, the living man is the first object which demands our investigation. The ‘average man’ of Europe having been determined by Quetelet, his system is now applied to races.”¹⁷⁵ To some extent, however, the army’s goals of racial comparison and of defining the “average man” were at odds. The former proved to be an investigation largely premised on difference rather than shared traits. More precisely, then, army scientists sought to define average men, each representative of a specific race or nativity. Notably, in a discussion of height distributions and mean value among different nativities, Baxter produced separate bell curves for white and black men, even though they shared a common country of birth. Given “the varied origin of the population of the United States,” he explained, the army scientists had to arrange their data accordingly, separating the country into its distinct racial parts in the interest of scientific precision.¹⁷⁶ In the past, he noted, attempts to determine average height were “confused” and inaccurate, largely due to their failure to adjust for categories of

¹⁷⁴ Baxter, *Vol. 1*, VI.

¹⁷⁵ Baxter, *Vol. 1*, 3. The quotation was from Carl Vogt. Lambert Quetelet was a Belgian philosopher and scientist who conducted extensive anthropometric research in Europe. His work was cited extensively in the reports of both the War Department and the Sanitary Commission.

difference like race and sex.¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, Baxter's critique of such studies was similar to critiques made of Morton for failing to distinguish between the sexes when measuring skulls. However, Baxter seems to imply that women might best be left out of such investigations entirely rather than the results simply being separated by sex. It was the height of man specifically that was of consequence for Baxter.

And indeed, manhood was the scope of the Army's concern overall, not just because male bodies were what the circumstances afforded them to study, but because manhood was central to the driving social and political concerns surrounding the war as well. Racial scientists outside the military context writing during this same period, men like Josiah Nott and John Van Evrie, based their arguments on personal, anecdotal observation rather than systematic measurement of actual human bodies. Yet they too focused predominantly on men, though theoretically at least, they would have had equal opportunity to observe men and women alike.

Certainly, the Bureau's examining physicians observed their subjects in far more intimate detail, though, as we shall see, not without their own racial preconceptions. In Volume I of its report, the Bureau provided an exhaustive description of the process by which the soldiers were examined. Each soldier was ushered into a bright room and promptly required to strip, in part to reveal any disqualifying defects a volunteer or substitute might seek to hide while revealing as healthy any drafted man feigning sickness, but also so that the soldier would be "thrown off his guard" to provoke truthful responses to the questions asked of him by the examining physician.¹⁷⁸ Nude, he was

¹⁷⁶ Baxter, Vol. 1, 20-21.

¹⁷⁷ Baxter, Vol. 1, 15.

¹⁷⁸ Baxter, Vol. 1, III.

questioned about his occupation, nativity, health, and family history, “his conversation at the same time enabling the surgeon to judge of his mental as well as of his physical qualifications.”¹⁷⁹ From there, each part of his body was examined for medical problems that would interfere with military service, then measured for the purposes of the Bureau’s anthropometric study.

In addition to health problems and general physical defects, the examining physicians were also looking for evidence of manhood. Among the list of otherwise physical disqualifying factors were ostensibly moral offenses, which themselves impinged on bodily integrity and civilized manhood. “An impaired constitution, the result of the constant abuse of stimulants, or of indulgence in the habit of masturbation, was an authorized ground for exemption,” for example.¹⁸⁰ They also looked more literally for manhood among the naked soldiers, to make sure that each soldier not only met the moral and mental standards of nineteenth-century manhood, but that his body was normatively male as well. One examining physician complained that even young “boys with hairless pubes” have the audacity to lie about their age, such that “the surgeon must be constantly upon the alert” that only prime specimens of adult manhood would make it into the military’s ranks.¹⁸¹ More notably, “loss of penis,” without further explanation, was listed as a disqualifying factor, as was “hermaphroditism.”¹⁸²

Ever vigilant in evaluating proper male genitalia, the same doctor who railed against the fraud perpetuated by hairless boys also reported that “a conscript appeared in the office for examination who came as near being a genuine hermaphrodite as any

¹⁷⁹ Baxter, Vol. 1, IV.

¹⁸⁰ Baxter, Vol. 1, 11.

¹⁸¹ “Surgeons’ Reports—Dr. Dixi Crosby, New Hampshire, 3rd District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 189.

¹⁸² Baxter, Vol. 1, LIV.

reported case.” “The man was about thirty years of age, five feet four inches in height, with very little beard,” Dr. Dixi Crosby observed, “but a luxuriant growth of hair about the pubes.” He commenced with an exhaustively thorough investigation, well beyond what was necessary to determine the disqualifying condition of hermaphrodism, which in this case was seemingly apparent to the naked eye (and thus obviating the need for an internal examination):

The breasts were largely developed; the hips broad; the hands and feet small. The penis was small, but well developed, and occupying the place of the clitoris. The labia majora were well developed, and the commissure decidedly marked. At the lower portion of each labium a small testicle could be felt, and the cord could be traced to the ring. The vagina was a mere cul de sac of about one inch in depth.

As Crosby noted, “The history of the case was curious.” But his curiosity extended beyond the conscript’s body to his social and sexual history as well. He recounted, “Until the age of nineteen he wore the habiliments [clothing] of the female, and associated only with females, conducting himself, according to his own account, precisely as did Achilles when introduced among the daughters of the Grecian king.” However, “at this age, his parents, becoming convinced of their mistake, changed his garments and the family residence at the same time.” Finally, Crosby remarked, “He has been twice married, but has had no issue, notwithstanding both marriages were consummated.”¹⁸³

Strangely, Crosby does not note what became of the potential soldier, but he was not likely accepted for military service since “hermaphrodism” was listed as grounds for disqualification. Crosby also does not note the conscript’s race, though one suspects that if he had been “colored” or “Indian,” Crosby would have included this information and

¹⁸³ “Surgeons’ Reports—Dr. Dixi Crosby, New Hampshire, 3rd District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 189. On scientific understandings of hermaphrodism, as well as the relative social flexibility of the hermaphrodite, in the nineteenth century, see Alice Dreger, *Hermaphrodites: The Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

possibly implied a relationship between race and sex deviation. White was the normative category throughout the reports and thus standard practice to indicate the race of a soldier only when he was not white. Moreover, with the status of black men's manhood an open question, a case study of a black "hermaphrodite" would have been of keen interest to the scientists and readers alike.

The most interesting aspect of Civil War anthropometric studies is not the data itself but what the scientists were looking for, how they interpreted what they saw, and the ways in which they represented their results. Also far more revealing, and decidedly less dry, are the reports compiled from physicians overseeing the routine examinations conducted on recruits and enlistees for military fitness. These reports offer a fascinating lens into the racial thought of hundreds of white physicians sympathetic to the Union cause, who were not otherwise engaged in ethnological work. They invoke many of the same racial tropes pervasive in ethnology, further demonstrating how influential ethnologists were in shaping nineteenth-century ideas about race.

Questionnaires were sent to the head physician of the examining board in each congressional district, in every Union state, and nearly every physician returned detailed reports, such as Dr. Crosby's discussed above, reproduced in full in the published volume. Two of the questions asked are of particular relevance here: "What nationality presents the greatest physical aptitude for military service?" and "Your experience as to the physical qualifications of the colored race for military service." These questions prompted many of the responding physicians to expound upon racial categories, and the definition—or, more often, definitions—of manhood. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority answered Americans to the first question. But it is the way this information was

presented that is most telling. Summarizing the results of the questionnaire, the editor tabulated the responses to the question of the nativity with the greatest physical aptitude for military service in a small table (Figure 6). The various nativities are listed in descending order by number of positive responses, except for “colored men,” who are placed out of order at the bottom of the list, even when the study’s own “empirical” research should put them fourth. This apparent oversight demonstrates in fascinating fashion the teleological nature of racial science and army scientists’ unconscious expectation that black men would fall in last place in the Civil War’s contest of manhood.

A large number of the doctors surveyed declined to answer the second question, about the Negro’s fitness for military service, citing a lack of personal experience examining black troops, upon which to base their conclusions. Of the respondents who did address the question, most answered in the affirmative, that the black men they examined were among “the finest specimens of physical development” and good soldiers.¹⁸⁴ However, in so doing, they often created competing definitions of manhood, which juxtaposed civilized intellectual manhood with the more brute physical manhood some deemed conducive to military service. The “complimentary” assessments of the negro’s military fitness often involved mixed compliments crediting black men with the latter. For example, Dr. Alex Burbank, 2nd District, Maine, believed “the colored race leads off as to physical qualifications for the military service.” He explained, “they are generally of a straight, soldier-like appearance; their habits of life have been such as to inure them to exposure; and there is less sensibility and refinement among them than we

¹⁸⁴ “Surgeons’ Reports—Dr. Joseph H. Streeter, Massachusetts, 3rd District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 201.

find in the white race, while there is just animal enough about them to make good soldiers.”¹⁸⁵

Others survey respondents reported that black men make good soldiers because of their allegedly imitative nature, obedience, and endurance of harsh conditions. Some of these doctors suggested, however, that these qualities were not biologically determined, but rather born of the “infamous and cruel history of the race.” Facing such pervasive mistreatment in the United States, “it has become his nature to obey,” Dr. Robert B. Carswell noted. “The necessity of this obedience forms the foundation of all the little he was ever taught. It has been forced into him by the branding iron and knotted lash of his inexorable teacher. Yes, the negro has already learned ‘the first duty of a soldier.’” Such material and social circumstances resulted in his unparalleled “power of endurance,” but Carswell found much to admire in the black soldier’s physical form as well. After praising black men’s “good ear for music,” vital to the mastery of military drills, he further remarked, “I have been struck with admiration at the wonderful display of symmetry, blended with muscular power, in many of these tawny sons of a common parentage.” Like Dr. Burbank, Carswell asserted that the negro was not just fit for military service, he possessed “the greatest physical aptitude for military service” of all the races and nativities to come before him, for “what constitutes ‘the physical qualification’ of a man ‘for military service,’ is mainly muscular development and power of endurance.”¹⁸⁶ The “positive” qualities Burbank and Carswell attributed to the black soldier, from his natural propensity for military drill to his physical and psychological endurance, were echoed throughout the War Department’s reports.

¹⁸⁵ “Surgeons’ Reports—Alex Burbank, Maine, 2nd District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 173.

Army physicians like Burbank and Carswell exhibited a kind of ambivalent respect for black soldiers. The characteristics they attributed to black men were valued in military service and the scientists were frequently impressed with black men's physical strength. Many physicians admitted black soldiers far exceeded their expectations, while others seemed genuinely moved by the soldiers' deeply personal commitment to the Union cause. Ultimately though, even the scientists who found much to admire reinforced that black men were well-suited to follow but not to lead. And scientists' praise of black soldiers was often premised on racial differences rather than similar abilities across racial lines.

Other scientists emphasized black men's capacities less than they praised white men as possessing a birthright to greatness in every respect. One physician from Massachusetts raved that New Englanders, "descended from the Anglo-Saxon," were "mentally and physically the most vigorous of modern races." Dr. John Sullivan's praise of Yankee superiority extended well beyond military service; these men had inherited "qualities of mind and body which admirably fit them for the twofold task of developing the resources of an unexplored continent, and of conducting on a grand scale the experiment of popular or democratic government."¹⁸⁷ In Dr. Sullivan's assessment, Anglo-Saxon men were by their very nature citizens, leaders, and conquerors of the land.

Among the few physicians whose assessments of the black soldier were mostly negative, "flat feet" tended to prevail among his deficits, while others pointed to features as varied as a "crooked spine" and "loosely-knit joints."¹⁸⁸ In this regard too, black men

¹⁸⁶ "Surgeons' Reports—Dr. Robert B. Carswell, New Hampshire, 2nd District" in Baxter, Vol. 1, 183.

¹⁸⁷ "Surgeons' Reports—Dr. John L. Sullivan, Massachusetts, 6th District" in Baxter, Vol. 1, 210.

¹⁸⁸ "Surgeons' Reports—Dr. R. McC. Lord, Connecticut, 3rd District and Dr. George Douglas, New York 19th District; Dr. George Douglas, New York, 19th District" in Baxter, Vol. 1, 237 and 250, 270.

were measured against a white prototype; their feet were “almost entirely wanting” of “the ordinary arch which exists in the European.” As was generally the case in racial science, the white race represented the “ordinary” and African-Americans the deviation. Dr. Lord of Connecticut found black men unsuitable for the infantry, “by reason of the peculiar conformation of their bodies.” Their “peculiar conformation” included narrow pelvises, slender and overly long limbs, ill developed calves, and again, flat feet. In Lord’s estimation, the black man did however possess “a sound and vigorous body” and was thus “in every way physically adapted for garrison duty, assailing earth-works, as well as for short marches, or charging upon the field of battle.”¹⁸⁹ In other words, while black men did not represent ideal soldiers themselves, their bodies were well-suited to labor for soldiers in the army’s camps.

Some physicians argued that military service required both brains and brawn and that African-Americans fell short on the former. Dr. H.S. Chubbuck of New York, for example, noted that despite black men’s praiseworthy musculature, “they do not seem to have the nervous energy or intelligent activity in that ratio that the native-born white possesses.”¹⁹⁰ Other physicians drew on common wisdom to maintain that the Northern free blacks they encountered volunteering for service in the Union Army were of poorer stock than their Southern counterparts, “for it is a well-known fact that they physically degenerate in this northern clime.”¹⁹¹ Most of the physicians surveyed, however, seemed to agree with New York physician William Roberts that “unless any moral deficiency annuls their physical vigor, they ought to make good soldiers.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ “Surgeons’ Reports—Dr. R. McC. Lord, Connecticut, 3rd District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 237.

¹⁹⁰ “Surgeons’ Reports—Dr. H.S. Chubbuck, New York, 26th District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 280-281.

¹⁹¹ “Surgeons’ Reports—Dr. George Douglas, New York, 19th District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 270.

¹⁹² “Surgeons’ Reports—Dr. William C. Roberts, New York, 8th District” in Baxter, Vol. 1, 251.

Mulatto soldiers received more negative responses. While most physicians lauded the black soldier's physical fitness, many found that "the mulatto, however, is comparatively worthless." The vast majority of the physicians echoed ethnologists like Cartwright, Nott, and Van Evrie in their assessment of mixed race men as decidedly less hardy men of either race alone, "subject to scrofula and tuberculosis," and largely unsuited to the rigors of military life.¹⁹³ In this regard, the reporting doctors seemed to draw at least as much on the prevailing racial stereotypes of the day as on their own experience examining black and mixed race servicemen. Their assessments did not challenge prevailing racialist assumptions, they reinforced them, and even the highest praise for black men was largely specific to the military context alone.

The Sanitary Commission also made a notable foray into anthropometrics and statistical analysis beginning in 1863. Its results generally mirrored those of the Provost Marshall-General Bureau studies, with a few exceptions.¹⁹⁴ The Commission collected medical (including mortality and disease incidence rates) and anthropometric data, both of which were arranged by race.¹⁹⁵ "The races composing our volunteer army consisted, chiefly, of American, Celtic, Teutonic, Negro, and the mixed Spanish-American of New Mexico," Dr. Roberts Bartholow, U.S. Army Assistant-Surgeon, explained in the introductory chapter of the first volume.¹⁹⁶ Military examination offered the perfect

¹⁹³ "Surgeons' Reports—Dr. C.L. Hubbell, New York, 15th District" in Baxter, Vol. 1, 261. Scientific attitudes about mixed race people are further discussed on page 41.

¹⁹⁴ For a discussion of the tensions between the two competing studies, see Haller, pages 22-23. As Benjamin Gould notes repeatedly in the second volume of the Sanitary Commission's reports, the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, under whose authority the Provost Marshal-General's Bureau studies were conducted, denied the Sanitary Commission access to the Bureau's data and resources.

¹⁹⁵ The medical data was published in 1867 as Volume 1 of the United States Sanitary Commission Memoirs, the anthropometric data as Volume 2 in 1869.

¹⁹⁶ Roberts Bartholow, "Sanitary Memoirs of the War—Chapter First: The Various Influences Affecting the Physical Endurance, the Power of Resisting Disease, etc., of the Men Composing the Volunteer Armies of the United States" in United States Sanitary Commission Memoirs—Volume 1, Medical: Contributions

opportunity for racial comparison. Like many racial scientists before him, Bartholow presented himself as scientifically curious and politically disinterested: “It will be useful to contrast, in no invidious spirit, the aptitude for military service and the power of endurance respectively displayed by these several races.” However, his interest was not just in “contrasting” the races, but also in ranking them. There was nothing arbitrary, then, about his list of the races under the military’s examination, which were listed in order of fitness, ostensibly for military service but also for manhood: “As regards these qualities, they stand to each other in the relation in which they are place above—the American first and the Spanish-American last.”¹⁹⁷

Bartholow then went on to characterize briefly each of these race’s men, though only native-born white men warranted a separate detailed paragraph on their “mental characteristics” in addition to their “physical qualities.” For non-white and foreign-born men, “mental and physical qualities” so overlapped that they were perhaps one and the same. Indeed, the Sanitary Commission largely reinforced the old ethnological adage that the physical man determined the intellectual and moral man, particularly in the “lower races” who could not seem to transcend their biology. The minimal attention given to the minds of non-white men reflected the common belief that while some races had certain physical attributes like physical strength or stamina that made them suitable rank and file soldiers, native born white men alone had the mental acuity necessary to be good military leaders.

relating to the Causation and Prevention of Disease, and to Camp Diseases: Together with a Report of the Diseases, etc. among the Prisoners at Andersonville, GA Ed. Austin Flint (New York: Published for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, by Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 4. It is worth clarifying that for Bartholow “the term American applies, of course, to the composite race now inhabiting the continent, and not to the aborigines.”

¹⁹⁷ Bartholow, 3.

Bartholow's assessment of the white race was glowing, although he drew at least as much on cultural mythology and stereotypes as biology in constructing an image of the typical man of each race. "The mental characteristics that fit the American for the military service consist of a spirit of enterprise and an intellectual hardihood which render him superior to fatigue," he opined, adding that white men had "an easy bearing under defeat, and a buoyant self-confidence which misfortunes do not easily depress." Bartholow dismissed charges that this independent spirit and confidence made white men bad soldiers, unable or unwilling to submit to the will of others or to group interests by simply noting that "events have not justified the harsh criticism." Faced with the Sanitary Commission's own data that did not place white men at the top of charts measuring height and muscular development—typical measures of manhood—Bartholow had to spin this information in favor of white men's fitness for military service. He did so in part by looking deeper into the body. "The physical qualities which fit the American for military service consist, not so much in muscular development and height as in the toughness of his muscular fibre and the freedom of his tissue from interstitial fat, whereby active and prolonged movements are much facilitated," he remarked. Even the white man's propensity to succumb to disease on the battlefield was more a product of the delicate digestive system of the civilized "than from a lack of power due to imperfect physical development" according to Bartholow.¹⁹⁸

By comparison, the "Celtic races" shared a physical character with white men but had "less tenacity of purpose and mental hardihood," submitted less readily to authority, adapted poorly to hardship, and chronologically complained about their situation. And

¹⁹⁸ Bartholow, 4.

the “German element of the volunteer army” fell short of native-born white and Celtic soldiers in terms of physical characteristics, suffering as they did from flat feet, varicose veins, and “unusual weakness of the abdominal rings.” The German did have “mental and moral qualities” that compensated somewhat for his bodily inadequacies, including “thrift...and a love of ease and enjoyment,” but his “fondness for good living” rendered him an uncommitted soldier when the rations were not up to snuff.¹⁹⁹

Examining and characterizing the black soldier in particular was an important and high-stakes venture in the Civil War era. A month after being appointed the Sanitary Commission’s actuary in 1864, Benjamin Gould appealed to the Commission to expand the scale and scope of its own anthropometric investigation. Identifying what he saw as a glaring gap in the research, Gould declared: “No examination of the negro troops seem to have yet been made, and the importance of such inspection needs no comment.”²⁰⁰ Bartholow paid special attention then to the black race in his introduction to the first volume. He concluded that black men shared the Germans’ bad feet, as well as “small, ill-developed calves” and a proneness to pulmonary disease. But, Bartholow noted, “The Negro possesses many of the physical qualities pertaining to the highest type of the soldier: sufficient height, a due correspondence between height and weight, amply thorax, and considerable power of endurance.”²⁰¹ Indeed, results that supported the army’s controversial decision to admit black men into the ranks would be welcomed by many.

¹⁹⁹ Bartholow, 4-5.

²⁰⁰ Benjamin Apthorp Gould, ed. United States Sanitary Commission Memoirs—Volume 2, Statistical: Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers (New York: Published for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, by Hurd and Houghton, 1869), 221.

²⁰¹ Bartholow, 5.

Still Bartholow could certainly not imply that black soldiers were more manly than white soldiers, even if the former had many qualities conducive to military service. Instead, he constructed an image of the black man as a good rank and file soldier that drew on popular and ethnological notions about African-Americans being obedient and child-like in mind if strong in body. “Having the faculty of imitation highly developed and being fond of the exterior show and parade of military life,” he maintained, “[the black man] readily becomes an adept in the mechanical training of the soldier.” Careful not to offend the white rank and file, Bartholow nonetheless concluded that whites were best suited for military service: “The Negro soldier is, unquestionably, less enduring than the white soldier; less active, vigilant, and enterprising, and more given to malingering.” As demonstrated by the summary reports penned by War Department examining doctors, discussed previously, the language and tenor of Bartholow’s consideration of black soldiers was typical of Civil War physicians, even if the actual anthropometric data occasionally differed between the two studies.

Ironically, despite the Sanitary Commission having collected enough medical data and anthropometric statistics to fill two large volumes, Bartholow ultimately based his judgment of each race’s military fitness on characteristics the Commission did not measure. For example, he noted the white man’s “toughness of...muscular fibre” and the black soldier’s insufficient activity and vigilance, which was supported nowhere in the body of either volume. Bartholow not only gave weight to traits outside the scope of the medical and anthropometric studies he introduced, he omitted research results that did not support the hierarchical order of race in his summary. The data in the second volume attributed the greatest height and head size to the “red man,” who was entirely absent

from Bartholow's discussion, for instance. As we know from Chapter One, enormous importance was placed on head size as reflecting intelligence, yet Bartholow did not analyze Indians' seeming superiority in his discussion of that particular data.

He returned to more familiar medical terminology—as well as familiar racial tropes—with his assessment of the mulatto and the mixed Spanish-American of New Mexico. Though the mulatto ranked between the white and black races by several measurements in the anthropometric tables in the second volume, Bartholow echoed the War Department physicians who asserted that biracial men placed below both races in general health and vigor: “The Mulatto is feebler than the Negro, invariably scrofulous, and more frequently the subject of pulmonary disease.”²⁰² Likewise, he placed the “mixed race of New Mexico,” which suffered from “feebleness of constitution, the syphilitic cachexia, impaired vision, deformities of the hands and feet, and diseases of the urinary organs,” below the black race. The physical defects of mixed race peoples translated into moral defects as well. “They are cowardly, unreliable, and difficult to

²⁰² Bartholow, 5. “Scrofulous” referred to a condition that included inflamed lymph nodes, likely a form of tuberculosis, and was often cited by ethnologists and medical professionals as symptomatic of degraded physiology—often associated with the lower classes and “lower races”—rather than a product of poor living conditions and inadequate health care. In regards to the ranking of biracial men in the anthropometric volume, “mulattoes” ranked between the white and black races in a particularly important measurement—the length of the forearm and its proportion to the arm overall. The longer forearm of black men was linked in the Commission's study to a closer proximity to apes, an argument echoed by ethnologists for decades after the War, who continuously used the Commission's data for support. That the mulatto's forearm length was between the black and white races clearly surprised the Sanitary Commission scientists, who noted that the table containing this particular bodily proportion revealed “many curious and interesting facts, full of significance to the physiologist and ethnologist” (Volume 2, page 317; see also page 634). They quickly moved on from this apparently incongruous detail. By contrast, whenever the Commission found mulattoes to “differ more from the whites than the full blacks do,” as they did in head dimensions, among other characteristics, much significance was attached to such measurements as indicative of race mixture's deleterious effect (see for example pages 382-383). Indeed, just two pages after noting the length of white, black, and biracial soldiers' forearms, the Commission used the same language it did earlier toward opposite ends to assert: “The curious and important fact that the mulattoes, or men of mixed race, occupy so frequently in the scale of progression a place outside of, rather than intermediate between, those races from the combination of which they have sprung, cannot fail to attract

control, in consequence of a very mercurial temperament,” Bartholow added. Drawing at least as much on popular stereotypes about race mixture as anything contained within the Sanitary Commission’s studies, Bartholow painted mixed race men as physically and socially diseased, weak and destined to die out. These men were the antithesis of the ideal soldier Bartholow imagined. In addition to a host of specific physical dimensions he lists, “the soldier should possess a cheerful disposition, a calm temper, and that indifference to danger and fatigue which is more frequently the result of mental forces than physical strength.”²⁰³ This ideal soldier was both brave and in control of his emotions and physical impulses (the same page notes that masturbation, alcoholism, and “bad moral character” could result in expulsion from the military’s ranks), not “feeble,” “mercurial,” or suffering from sexually transmitted diseases.

Wrapped up in the Commission’s construction of the ideal soldier was its search for the typical man, as with the War Department’s study. “In the present research we are dealing only with some of his external manifestations,” Benjamin Gould remarked, “but we aim at the deduction of the numerical expressions of these as a step toward constructing the typical or average man.” Though the Commission was measuring only the average man’s “external manifestations,” such research nonetheless allowed scientists to “discover not merely the outward semblance of this abstract being, but his needs, capacities, intellect, judgment, and tendencies.”²⁰⁴ As indicated by Gould’s quotation of

attention. The well-known phenomenon of their inferior vitality may stand, possibly, in some connection with the fact thus brought to light” (319).

²⁰³ Bartholow, 7. Among the physical conditions “most favorable to military service,” Bartholow listed “medium height, a weight of 160 pounds, 33 inches in the girth of the chest, and an expansive mobility of 3 inches” (6). Further, the even more specific proportions and ratios he goes on to list indicate that though his essay was in the first volume of the Sanitary Commission Memoirs, which described its medical data, he was more than well-versed in the anthropometric data contained in the second.

²⁰⁴ Gould, 246.

Belgian scientist Quetelet, much was at stake in this average man: “The average man is for a nation what the center of gravity is for a body.”²⁰⁵ Left unsaid here, but certainly implied throughout the Commission’s report, was that the body was at the center of the man—who he was and what he could do. Moreover, while the Commission constructed an average physical and mental type for each race, the races were all compared to a white norm. The “average” man and the ideal man were white; the white man was the center of gravity for the national body. As Sarah Igo observes in reference to Quetelet’s foundational search for the “average man” in the 1830s, “the drive to determine the average was part empirical quest, part cultural preoccupation.”²⁰⁶

That the Sanitary Commission sought to define not just the ideal soldier but also the ideal man was revealed in a short but fascinating section, titled “Pilosity of Negroes.” Here, it becomes even clearer that the Commission was interested in physical characteristics well beyond the scope of what ostensibly could be useful on the battlefield. “The question as to the relative amount of pilosity, or general hairiness of the body, in the white and black races is one of some anthropological and ethnological interest,” Gould mused. Gould of course was correct; as we have already seen in the case of Van Evrie, secondary sex characteristics like body and facial hair were indeed of keen interest to ethnologists during and after the Civil War, for whom defining manhood along

²⁰⁵ Gould, 247. Quetelet’s earlier anthropometric work, foundational in the field, was frequently cited in the Commission’s reports. On the influence of Quetelet’s data and methodology on the Sanitary Commission’s work, see Haller, 21-22.

²⁰⁶ Sarah E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 19. Igo argues, however, that the impact of his work would not be fully felt until the twentieth century. Making no mention of anthropometrics in general or the Civil War studies of the “average man” conducted by the Sanitary Commission and War Department specifically, she concludes, “scientific characterizations of the “average” or “typical” American were a striking phenomenon of the new [twentieth] century” (11). A useful discussion of the processes of creating norms as well as “the relationship between social norms and various scientific and professional

racial lines was essential to arguments about racial destinies. Also interesting about this particular measure is that only the bodies of black men were examined, unlike all of the other sections in the report, where bodies of each race were measured by the same apparatus and compared. Though the results were compared to white men, no actual examination of them appeared to have been conducted—no numerical data was given. The nature of the typical white male body was simply assumed here, a norm that needed no measure. It was the manhood of the black race specifically that was of interest to the Commission, and by extension, to ethnologists.²⁰⁷

Even more interesting than the uncharacteristically limited scope of this particular measure was the methodology employed to obtain it. Here, Gould describes a far different scene than that of soldiers lining up to be inspected by doctors wielding andrometers and other measuring tools:

In order to obtain if possible some general information on this subject [pilosity], Mr. Russell, when accompanying the 25th Army Corps to the Texan boundary, was requested to avail himself of any opportunity which might occur, to observe the colored troopers when unclothed, and to record the pilosity upon a scale in which a skin apparently perfectly smooth should be denoted by 0, and an amount of general hairiness equal to the maximum which he had ever seen or should see in a white man, should be called 10. This commission Mr. Russell executed by observing the men while bathing, which was an event of almost daily occurrence in the torrid climate near the mouth of the Rio Grande.²⁰⁸

constructions of ‘normality’” can also be found in Mary Louise Adams, The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 12-17.

²⁰⁷ Gould, 568.

²⁰⁸ Gould, 568. It is worth noting that the 25th Army Corps served in Texas after the Civil War officially ended; many of the black soldiers expected to be mustered out of the army but were instead sent to patrol the Mexican border. See for example Free At Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War, Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds. (New York: The New Press, 1992), 511-513. This is noteworthy because this particular physical investigation fell outside general chronology of the Sanitary Commission’s anthropometric studies, a final, somewhat unofficial attempt to interrogate the manhood of black bodies, even more of an issue once the Civil War had ended and the question of citizenship rights was of considerable consequence.

Russell was a busy man indeed and apparently had good eyesight. From his observation post near the bathing men, he “noted the relative pilosity of 2129 different colored soldiery, full blacks and mulattoes together.” One can only imagine what the black soldiers made of the good scientist, spying on them in their nudity, writing furiously in his notebook as they bathed. Russell provided his results in a table that correlated the number of men to degree of “pilosity.”

Though none of the black or mulatto men obtained a 10—the height of hairiness for white men—Russell’s results conformed more or less to a bell curve. Thus Gould ultimately conceded that with the “excellent distribution” of Russell’s results, “the unavoidable inference [is] that there is but little, if any, difference between the white and black races in this respect.”²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, that the Sanitary Commission endeavored to measure a secondary sex characteristic in African-Americans alone reveals they were not just interested in black masculinity in relation to military service, but also by extension his potential for manhood more generally, with all the socio-political rights afforded it. The inherent manhood, body and mind, of the white race was a given; the issue of black manhood, however, was up for scientific and political debate.

The medical and anthropometric reports published by the Sanitary Commission and the War Department were frequently cited by racial scientists in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, many of the scientists discussed in subsequent chapters themselves served as military surgeons during the war for both the Union and Confederate armies.²¹⁰ As historian John Haller, Jr. has noted, “Ironically, the war which freed the slave also

²⁰⁹ Gould, 569.

²¹⁰ Among the scientists discussed in subsequent chapters, Hunter McGuire and F.E. Daniel served as military surgeons for the Confederacy; R.W. Shufeldt and P.C. Remondino for the Union.

helped to justify racial attitudes of nineteenth-century society.”²¹¹ As we have seen, even those scientists and physicians who seemed to be making conscious efforts at objective data collection were nonetheless influenced by popular and ethnological racial thought in what they were looking for and how they interpreted what they found. Even the more “positive” assessments of black soldiers contained in the reports by the War Department’s examining physicians lent support to postbellum ethnological attacks on black men as citizens. “Obedience” and an “imitative nature” could serve black men well on the battlefield, but not in the voting booth. Moreover, postbellum ethnologists alluding to the Civil War anthropometric studies would often cite the measurements that supported their arguments and ignore those that did not.

With the publication of the Sanitary Commission and War Department’s reports during Reconstruction, postbellum ethnologists were armed with anthropometric and medical data on thousands of living men to support their arguments about racial difference. Aside from how ethnologists employed this data after the war, however, there is a rather obvious limitation to the data itself that warrants highlighting here. As Benjamin Gould admitted in the Sanitary Commission’s reports, “the anthropological results here given are of course restricted in their very nature, pertaining as they do...to one sex only.”²¹² For half a century following the war, ethnologists bolstered their claims about racial difference with studies conducted solely on men. Whereas much of antebellum ethnology focused implicitly on men, scientists looked literally to male bodies during the Civil War and its aftermath. Though discussions of black women and

²¹¹ Haller, 20.

²¹² Gould, vii. In addition to the study’s limitation to one sex, Gould conceded it was also limited “to those ages, for that sex, in which the physical changes are least marked. Comparatively few of our inferences

their reproductive capacities had been increasing in ethnology prior to Emancipation, specifically around the issue of slavery, the Peculiar Institution's demise refocused ethnology on citizenship and the capacities of black men.

“This difference of manhood”: Race, Sex, and Citizen Bodies

“You seem to be in a good deal of political excitement at the North and I think the whole country must see much trouble before order is fully instituted,” Nott wrote to his friend, Philadelphia physician Joseph Leidy, in 1866. Meanwhile, he continued, “the South is whipped into quietude and except for the politicians, the people take little interest in Congressional proceedings—most of us do not know what the Constitutional amendment is that they are quarreling about.”²¹³ Positioning himself here as a politically disinterested member of “the people” who took no special notice of Reconstruction, Nott's published writings during the period reveal him to be anything but disengaged and apolitical. Just one year prior, for example, Nott penned a fiery missive to the Superintendent of the newly formed Freedman's Bureau, Major-General O.O. Howard. Ironically, Howard had appropriated the Medical College of Alabama in Mobile where Nott worked to use as a freedmen's school—much to Nott's chagrin. In the letter, he argued that black men were physically incapable of citizenship, their bodies designed solely for labor, and that any attempt to educate or enfranchise them ran counter to nature itself. Furthermore, he asserted, “Without going back to the mooted question of original

extend to ages not within the limits of military service, where the physical organization has nearly or quite attained its full development, and the decline has not yet fairly commenced.”

²¹³ Josiah Nott to Joseph Leidy, October, 18, 1866, Box 5, Ser. 1.1. Subfolder—Nott, Josiah Clark, Joseph Leidy Papers (Library of the College of Physicians Of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA).

unity or diversity of species, the diversity of races as it exists can only be regarded as the work of the Almighty.”²¹⁴

Whereas Nott was previously concerned with where the races came from, by 1865 he was more concerned with where they were going. Considering the once “grave question” of racial origins now a moot point, he turned his attention instead to the pressing—and gendered—issue of citizenship. For decades leading up to Emancipation, women’s rights activists had been profoundly shaping the ways in which citizenship was represented and conceived in American public discourse. In 1852, Paulina Wright Davis, who wrote on and organized around women’s suffrage, described women as a political “enigma.” “Freeborn and thus logically entitled to their privileges and rights as ‘birthright’ members of the United States, women nevertheless constituted a politically and legally ‘disabled caste,’” historian Nancy Isenberg explains. “The enigma, then, was this: freeborn women had the appearance of citizenship but lacked the basic rights to be real citizens.”²¹⁵ True citizenship involved far more than place of birth, women continuously argued; it was a complex web of rights and protections routinely denied to large portions of the American populace.

After the Civil War, black Americans found themselves in a similarly complex middle ground as neither slaves nor citizens, but rather a free labor force with few tangible rights or protections under the law. Prominent women’s rights advocates pointed out, though, that freedmen were already one step ahead of women since married women

²¹⁴ Josiah Nott, “The Negro Race: Its ethnology and history,” a letter to Major-General O.O. Howard, Superintendent Freedmen’s Bureau, reprinted in the *Mobile Daily Times*, February 22nd, 1866 (originally written November 25th, 1865), in *Anti-Black Thought, Volume Seven: Racial Determinism and the Fear of Miscegenation, Pre-1900* ed. John David Smith (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 26.

²¹⁵ Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), xii.

lacked rights to contract and the fruits of their labor legally belonged to their husbands—a situation they deemed as akin to slavery. In other words, racial inequality provided women a language in which to frame their own protests about gender inequities.²¹⁶ In using politically charged analogies to race, slavery, and freedom, these early feminists also highlighted the limits of birthright citizenship versus the full citizenship rights extended to white men. When Reconstruction era ethnologists then discussed the capacity of the black race for citizenship, it is this broader definition to which they referred—one that included full participation in American political life and, mostly notably, the franchise.

With the end of the Civil War, emancipation became an unavoidable reality and white ethnologists struggled to make sense of a racial order unbounded by chattel slavery. For Nott, “The first question, then, to be settled is, the capacity of the negro for self-government.” He wondered, “Is he capable of taking any part in the march of civilization beyond that of a mere ‘hewer of wood and drawer of water?’ Does his history afford proof that his intellect is susceptible of any really useful development?” No, he told General Howard, “These are questions which his past record certainly answers in the negative.”²¹⁷

Nott’s letter to the Freedman’s Bureau, which was reprinted for a wide audience in 1866 in the Mobile Daily Times, was typical of Reconstruction-era ethnology in several important regards. Employing science to support explicitly political ends, the letter rooted capacity for citizenship in the physical body. Moreover, the citizen body it

²¹⁶ Amy Dru Stanley, “Conjugal Bonds and Wage Labor: Rights of Contract in the Age of Emancipation,” Journal of American History, 75 (Sept. 1988): 471-500.

²¹⁷ Nott, “The Negro Race: Its ethnology and history,” 10.

constructed was both male and white. His letter also demonstrates that although slavery had been abolished in the United States it did not disappear in American ethnology. On the contrary, ethnology published after the Civil War still often juxtaposed citizenship and slavery as the natural roles of men on opposite ends of the racial hierarchy and presented the work of Reconstruction as at best uninformed by scientific fact and at worst dangerous. Forced to integrate the reality of slavery's demise into their arguments about racial hierarchy, postbellum ethnologists typically argued that although the structure of society had changed, the black man's biology had not, regardless of any legislative or philanthropic attempts to change his position. Notably, with questions of citizenship driving Reconstruction-era ethnology, scientists like Nott were now primarily concerned with the bodies and pursuits of men.

In his "Instinct of Races" [1866], published in the New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, Nott reasserted his belief in race as a permanent, physiological force that resisted human intervention.²¹⁸ Throughout the text, Nott quoted from Van Evrie's work and positioned his own expertise on black men's physiological and intellectual nature as vitally important to politicians, for "governments can never legislate wisely, without due consideration of these important facts."²¹⁹ Having explained repeatedly why politicians needed to be informed by racial science, he also told his scientific readers why his admittedly political treatise belonged in a medical journal. "It may be objected that 'such kind of stuff' does not properly find a place in a scientific journal," he conceded, "but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that man's civil history is a part of his

²¹⁸ Josiah Clark Nott, "Instinct of Races" (1866) reprinted in Anti-Black Thought, Vol. 7: Racial Determinism and the Fear of Miscegenation, Pre-1900 ed. John David Smith (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 58.

²¹⁹ Nott, "Instinct of Races," 47.

natural history, and that faithful picture of a race cannot be drawn without including with the physical the moral and intellectual history, habits, actions, etc.” For Nott, man’s natural history also determined his civil future. He asserted that his work was not just relevant to scientists and political leaders, it was vital for all concerned citizens: “This subject is not one for mere idle speculation and curious scientific research—it is one of immense practical interest to the people of the United States at this time, and it is our duty calmly to enquire what is to be the future of the white and black races of this continent.”²²⁰

While racial theorists like Nott were addressing their ethnology tracts explicitly to the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Republican Party, ethnology had other audiences as well. Indeed, as Nott predicted, the future of the white and black races was of great interest to politicians and concerned citizens. This poster from the 1866 PA gubernatorial race, promoting Democratic candidate Hiester Clymer, who ran on a white supremacy platform, looks remarkably similar to the kind of illustration one might find in an ethnology text (Figure 7). Scientific illustrations in the nineteenth century often juxtaposed black and white heads or profiles to denote physical—and by implication mental—difference and hierarchy. Furthermore, the prominent forehead of the white man in the poster was likely no accident either, nor was the “less capacious...frontal region” and “retreating forehead” of the black man.²²¹ Scientific studies of crania, including phrenology, the most popular of these disciplines among lay readers, abounded with comparative descriptions and images of black and white foreheads as evidence of

²²⁰ Nott, “Instinct of Races,” 47.

²²¹ D.H. Jacques, “Colored People: Considered Scientifically and Socially” The Phrenological Journal and Science of Health (December 1877): 402.

the former's small frontal lobe, which indicated incapacity for higher order thinking skills.²²² Moreover, the poster mirrors ethnology's presentation of Reconstruction as a contest between men. The poster reads that Clymer is "for the white man," represented by the idealized head we see on the left, contrasted with this stereotypically exaggerated black head that represents his opponents platform as "for the Negro." The exaggerated countenance of the black man here, which stands in for the Republican Party platform, gives visual form to postbellum ethnologists' critique of black male suffrage as an affront to nature and physiological fact.

This campaign poster, as well as Nott's Instinct of Races and letter to the Freedmen's Bureau, demonstrates how much politics and racial science were in dialogue during Reconstruction. The line between was constantly, and they drew upon each other for support and legitimacy. Ethnology provided anti-Reconstruction politicians with a familiar set of arguments and imagery of black inferiority. Moreover, during Reconstruction, scientific discourse on race and general racist literature and imagery were often nearly indistinguishable. Ethnologists engaged with political debates and used their scientific authority to instruct society on civil affairs while political writers like Helper drew on ethnology to support their vision of a white male polity.

After the Civil War, Helper immediately turned his attention from ridding the United States of slavery to ridding the country of the former slaves. Like Nott, he saw racial science and contemporary political debates as interdependent. In considering the removal of the black race from the United States, if not the planet (although he argued that nature would eventually do just that), he brought "to [his] aid the investigations and

²²² See for example, Jacques, "Colored People: Considered Scientifically and Socially."

discoveries of the most learned naturalists who have ever lived,” including Nott, Samuel Morton, and Thomas Jefferson. “These, surely, are those whose voices, above all others, should be most attentively heard and heeded in the discussion of the specific subjects here mentioned,” Helper lauded in his 1867 text, Nojoque: A Question for a Continent.²²³

Notably, he dedicated the text to “that most enlightened and progressive portion of the people of the New World, who have the far-reading foresight and the manly patriotism, to determine irrevocably, by their votes, in 1868...no slave nor would be slave, no negro nor mulatto, no Chinaman nor unnative Indian, no black or bi-colored individual of whatever name or nationality, shall ever find domicile anywhere within the boundaries of the United States of America.”²²⁴ In the text itself, Helper contrasted these manly patriots of white America with the “decrepit and effete races,” “whose colors are black or brown...and whose mental and moral characteristics are no less impure and revolting than their swarthy complexions.”²²⁵ By continually feminizing African Americans, he distanced them from the possibility of political and social power. Men alone could be citizens and leaders and there were no men among the “effete races.”

Though his dedication seems to imply that Helper held equal animus for all non-whites, the chapters themselves starkly revealed that the “question for a continent” revolved around black people specifically. One chapter was titled “The Servile Baseness and Beggary of the Blacks,” while other parts juxtaposed the black and white races as polar opposites in every respect: chapter four examined “White Celebrities, Black Nobodies” and “Chapter II—Black; A Thing of Ugliness, Disease, and Death” was

²²³ Hinton Rowan Helper, Nojoque: A Question for a Continent (New York: Carleton and Co., 1867), 16.

²²⁴ Helper, Nojoque, frontispiece.

²²⁵ Ibid, vii, vi.

followed by “Chapter III—White; A Thing of Life, Health, and Beauty.” Moreover, he began the book by querying, “What is the best and only true remedy for the present and prospective troubles now brewing in the United States, between the White people and the Negroes?”—to which he answered, “An absolute and eternal separation of the two races.” Separation was only the first, immediate step, however. Helper argued African Americans should ultimately be removed from the country entirely, setting July 4th, 1976 as a target date for U.S. independence “from the negroes.”²²⁶ Likewise, most ethnological writing from this period continued to focus on comparing the black and white races.

The black/white juxtapositions that structured the book also reflected Helper’s gendered hierarchy of race. Chapter six considered “A Score of Bible Lessons in the Arts of Annihilating Effete Races,” while chapter seven described “The United States of America; A White Man Power.” Also noteworthy is that Helper, who previously eschewed ethnology (yet nonetheless frequently engaged with its core tenets and cited its most prominent players), included in Nojoque a lengthy chapter on “The Negro, Anthropologically Considered.” Therein, he sought to prove “that this difference of manhood, this despicable inferiority of the negro, is natural, conspicuous and permanent.”²²⁷ In so doing, he scrutinized part by part the entire male body, citing the most prominent American and European ethnologists.²²⁸ A new convert to ethnology, he

²²⁶ Ibid, 14-15.

²²⁷ Ibid, 16.

²²⁸ It is also worth noting here that Helper apparently went beyond relying on secondhand testimony in his consideration of the “peculiar and distinguishing characteristics of the negro” (Nojoque, 16). While residing in New York in the 1860s, a relative who was attending the University Medical School allowed Helper on several occasions to “accompany him to the dissecting rooms” where he inspected black bodies, quite literally, for himself. Helper, Nojoque, 22.

alternated between a voice of scientific matter-of-factness and unveiled vitriol, titling one section, for example, “The Negro’s Vile and Vomit-Provoking Stench.”

While differences of manhood were indeed his primary concern, black women did not escape Helper’s scrutiny. In a section on “The Breasts,” he included excerpts from European travel narratives of Africa that recounted women “with such great breasts that they can fling them over their shoulders, and give their children suck that hang at their backs,” breasts that are “in the eyes of a European, a real object of horror.”²²⁹

Questioning black women’s femaleness, he also included an excerpt from Sir John Barrow’s “Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa” describing in lurid detail the elongated inner labia of Hottentot women he encountered, which “leave the spectator in doubt as to what sex they belong.” For Helper, the Hottentot apparently stood in for all black women.²³⁰

Ethnology and gender also figured prominently in Helper’s second anti-black diatribe, The Negroes in Negroland, the Negroes in America, and Negroes Generally, subtitled “Also, The Several Races of White Men, Considered as the Involuntary and Predestined Supplanters of The Black Race.” Again extensively excerpting ethnologists throughout, and even quoting Josiah Nott on the book’s frontispiece, Helper positioned himself as “a rational Republican” exposing the dangerous folly of Reconstruction endorsed by Radical Republicans.²³¹ “The [Republican] party has, since the termination of the war, viciously and unpardonably abandoned the old landmarks of just and sacred

²²⁹ Ibid, 51. As noted earlier, Jennifer Morgan demonstrates that the trope of black women being able to “suckle over their shoulder” dated back to the age of European exploration, and served to represent black women as both animalistic and fecund.

²³⁰ Ibid, 54-55.

²³¹ Hinton Rowan Helper, The Negroes in Negroland, The Negroes in America, and Negroes Generally (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1868).

fealty to race,” he wrote. He finished his thought with language that was both politically and sexually charged, envisioning a post-Reconstruction future in which the white majority was sexually enslaved by a black minority: “and it is now advocating what means the prostitution in bulk of a great and good white integer to a small and bad black fraction.” “The policy of the Radical (not the Republican) party, if carried out to its logical ends, will inevitably result in the forced political, religious, civil, and social equality of the white and black races,” he continued, dangers he hoped to lessen by reminding his readers that nature itself had made the races different and unequal.

Among the features Helper listed as a counterargument to such equality were the black man’s “strange, Eunuch-toned voice” and “the scantiness of beard on his face.”²³² Helper looked not only to sex—black men’s physical lack of manhood—but also to gender in his indictment of the black race. He examined at length examples of Africans and African Americans failing to act in accordance with white American gender norms, devoting whole chapters to topics like “Nakedness, Shamelessness, and Prostitution in Negroland” and “Courtship, Marriage, and Concubinage in Negroland.” Throughout, he expounded on black women’s aversion to the trappings and responsibilities of domesticity and painted black men as cowardly, amoral, intellectually deficient, and utterly opposed to work. No idle insults, Helper’s bleak assessment of African Americans’ inability to adhere to white gender norms spoke implicitly to the sociopolitical rights and protections that should be afforded or denied them at a time when suffrage—for women as well as black men—was subject to constant debate.

²³² Ibid, VIII-X.

Ethnologists, for their part, were deeply invested in these public contestations over the meanings and parameters of citizenship and sought to bring their expertise on race to bear on American politics. As Nancy Isenberg notes, “Granting the ballot to ‘every man who fights and pays,’ in the words of Thomas Jefferson, provided a republican theory of universal white male enfranchisement.”²³³ But after Emancipation, this standard’s link to whiteness was increasingly tenuous. After all, did northern free blacks and an emerging black middle class in the South not “pay” in society and did black soldiers not fight bravely in the Civil War, even by military ethnologists’ accounts? During Reconstruction, prominent ethnologists sought to reinforce a racialized and gendered definition of citizenship that would ensure that though African Americans were no longer slaves, they could not be full citizens.

White ethnologists during Reconstruction presented a largely united front on the question of citizenship for black men. Even ethnologists who had criticized slavery as an abuse of power prior to Emancipation rallied to the cause of reasserting pervasive racial difference and a white standard of citizenship during Reconstruction. They generally launched a three-pronged attack on black (male) citizenship, arguing: 1) the Constitution was never intended by its authors to include African Americans or women as part of the electorate, that it was written by and about white males; 2) black men were not “male” by bodily standards (and citizenship was legally tied to manhood); and 3) they did not and could never have the intellectual capacity required of informed citizenship. The black man, now free from the plantation, was still slave to his biology.

²³³ Isenberg, 7.

Most white ethnologists dispensed with the first of these arguments as a mere statement of fact; that the original Constitution was only intended to ensure the rights and protections afforded to white men seemed to warrant little elaboration. Demonstrating that black men were not really men and thus undeserving of the political rights attached to manhood, however, was an argument to which Reconstruction era ethnologists devoted considerable rhetorical energy. The questions of citizenship surrounding the emancipation of millions of people born on U.S. soil held tremendous import to the future social, cultural, and political landscape of the newly reunited country.

Ethnologists had boxed themselves into a rhetorical quandary of sorts, having long represented slavery and citizenship as oppositional political states with no real middle ground. The “enigmatic” position of white women as neither slave nor full citizen had never been factored into the slavery/citizenship binary constructed by antebellum ethnologists. With the full rights of nineteenth-century U.S. citizenship contingent on manhood, by their own logic millions of black men would have to be citizens if they were no longer slaves—unless they were not actually men. Postbellum ethnology then justified placing black men in a political middle ground between slavery and citizenship by positioning them in a physiological middle ground regarding sex. While Reconstruction era ethnologists still juxtaposed slavery and citizenship as the natural positions of inferior and dominant races, Emancipation had disrupted that natural order. Ethnologists were left with the task of providing scientific support for denying black men the franchise so that the races would not be on equal political and social planes, which would obliterate the natural order entirely.

In an 1866 pamphlet, “The Six Species of Men,” Van Evrie both revived and revised his argument about the black man’s supposed paucity of beard as symbolic of his racial inferiority. Whereas earlier he used the beard to impugn black manhood in general, in “The Six Species of Men,” he linked the beard specifically to intellectual and political capacity. In 1861, he used this physical lack of manhood to counter abolitionists’ characterization of slavery as an institution in which man held his fellow man in bondage. During Reconstruction, Van Evrie employed insufficient manhood to attack black enfranchisement. The Freedmen’s Bureau, aid societies, and northern volunteers took the place of the abolitionists as the new object of Van Evrie’s ridicule, deluded idealists blind to the realities of nature. In “The Six Species of Men,” he discussed the numerous biological differences he perceived among the races, differences that ostensibly determined each race’s place in the natural and social order. Among these differences, “the Caucasian is really the only bearded race, and this is the most striking mark of its supremacy over all others.” Again, white men were the standard by which others were measured: “All other races approximate to [white beards] in this respect, but the typical, woolly-headed negro, except a little tuft on the chin, and sometimes on the upper lip, has nothing that can be confounded with a beard.” The pamphlet’s illustrations supported his claims correlating race with facial hair and underscored his focus on men. Drawings of male figures were used to represent each of the six races and the Caucasian is the only man shown with a bushy, flowing beard (Figure 8).

Van Evrie’s textual and visual attention to beards was not simply a matter of aesthetics. In “The Six Species of Men,” Van Evrie made an explicit connection between a secondary sex characteristic (the beard) and capacity for citizenship. “If [Freedmen’s

Bureau agents] expect to make something of Sambo, they must strike for “equal beard” for him as well as for “equal education,” or “equal voting,” he proclaimed.²³⁴ Van Evrie, like other ethnologists in the period, thought intellectual and political capacity was biologically determined. In an era when citizenship and manhood were inseparable categories, these scathing indictments of black masculinity and political capacity were not simply a critique of the performance of gender, but rather envisioned a sexed body contingent on race. That is, rather than discuss black men engaging in unmanly behavior by white nineteenth-century standards, Van Evrie grounded his claims in the body itself by alleging that black men lacked a crucial physical marker of manhood. Ironically, growing numbers of surgeons and physicians—a group of which Van Evrie was part—were renouncing “the long full beard, a traditional symbol of masculine authority and distinction” in the late nineteenth century as a result of lessons learned about germs during the Civil War.²³⁵ Nonetheless, Van Evrie, used the beard not just to differentiate the varieties of men, but also to argue that there was no sharp line between men and women among African Americans.

In the work of Van Evrie, Nott and other ethnologists, the very bodies of the freedmen were deemed incapable of intellectual pursuits or political agency. Political capacity should be contingent on intellectual capacity, ethnologists argued, and as a group, white men alone possessed such mental fortitude. Ethnological texts such as “The

²³⁴ John Van Evrie, “The Six Species of Men, with cuts representing the types of the Caucasian, Mongol, Malay, Indian, Esquimaux, and Negro” (1866) reprinted in Anti-Black Thought 1863-1925—Volume One: Anti-Abolition Tracts and Anti-Black Stereotypes, ed. John David Smith (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 138.

²³⁵ Nancy Tomes, The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 104, 126-27. It is also important to note that Van Evrie was by no means the first scientist to attach racial significance to the beard. For example, in Nature’s Body: Gender in the

Six Species of Men” also underscore an important point in regards to sex, gender, and scientific racism. The language of biological difference used to categorize human beings by race in the nineteenth-century was often identical to the “biology is destiny” arguments made by doctors, anatomists, and naturalists in regards to the “woman question” even earlier. In other words, a familiar scientific lexicon of sex difference provided nineteenth-century scientists an ideological framework through which to conceptualize race. For many doctors and scientists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, any argument for social and political equality between the sexes ignored the “fact” of immutable physical and mental differences between men and women. Nearly every part of the body was examined and discussed as to the evidence it provided for women’s “natural” domestic roles and inability for political involvement. The body then held the key to both race and sex.

The issue of intellectual capacity and efficacy of formal education is perhaps where we see the most similarity and influence between scientific claims about sex difference that began as early as the seventeenth century and the racial sciences that followed in the nineteenth century. Some scientists believed that women’s head shape and delicate necks proved incapable of supporting the large cerebellum necessary for the higher order thinking and rationality characteristic of men. Women’s menstrual cycles, too, were thought to render them unfit for higher education and activity outside the domestic sphere and motherhood. Throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, doctors were concerned with the lower birthrates among educated women, which they saw as evidence that higher education not only decreased women’s interest in and

commitment to motherhood and domesticity, but that it had biological consequences as well. The energy necessary for menstruation and ovulation was being diverted to women's brains, thereby decreasing their fertility—the very thing that defined them as women. Later in the nineteenth century, for example, G. Stanley Hall, a prominent psychologist and outspoken critic of “race suicide” among whites worried that educated women would become “functionally castrated...deplore the necessity of childbearing...and abhor the limitations of married life.” A gynecologist contemporary of Hall added that educated women were “sexual incompetents.”²³⁶ Hall's choice of words is interesting, for a woman may become less like a woman by being over-educated, but being “functionally castrated” through education would not in turn make her like a man. Women then were not only anatomically ill-suited for education, but attempts to educate them would render them unfit for what they were designed—reproduction.

Similarly, nineteenth-century white ethnologists typically argued that the bodies of African peoples could not support education beyond simple vocational instruction. “If [the negro] had the broad forehead and small cerebellum, or posterior brain, of the white man, on the same body, he would no longer possess a center of gravity,” Van Evrie predicted. Thus, he claimed that educating a black man would not help him, it would literally cause him to fall over: “It is obvious, therefore, if Gen. Howard [Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau] and the Yankee school marms could ‘educate’ Sambo into intellectual equality with the white man, their protégé would be as incapable of standing

marker in eighteenth-century European science; see esp. 120.

²³⁶ Quoted in John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 190. See also Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

on his feet as he would if they had cut his head entirely off.”²³⁷ Van Evrie applied similar logic to race as Hall did to the “woman question.” Where education would render women biologically unfit for their true purpose ordained by nature—reproduction—education would render African Americans unfit for their purpose—labor—as reflected in their allegedly stooped skeletons naturally designed for toiling in the field. If black men and women of all races could not be sufficiently educated by nature of their bodies, they could not be expected to perform the duties of citizenship or make an informed vote.

Indeed, the sciences of sex difference and the sciences of racial difference were so closely linked that ethnologists often made analogies between (white) women and African Americans.²³⁸ In “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science,” Nancy Stepan notes “gender was found to be remarkably analogous to race, such that the scientist could use racial difference to explain gender difference, and vice versa.” Women and the “lower races” were determined to be similarly deficient in brain weight and structure, and corresponding intellectual inferiority.²³⁹ Stepan’s argument is most easily applied to post-bellum thought, a point she does not emphasize that is of relevance here. Indeed, of the primary sources she cites that compare women and the “lower races,” all but one were written after 1860.

For Van Evrie, a politically empowered black man and a politically empowered white woman were equally absurd and unnatural. Neither women nor African Americans

²³⁷ Van Evrie, “Six Species of Men,” 137.

²³⁸ I use “white” in parentheses here to indicate that when white ethnologists did use women as a point of comparison, the context and language they used indicates they generally meant white women specifically, even though they tended to simply refer to “women.” When they were writing about black women, they specified this by referring to “negro women” or “negresses.” So just as ethnologists often used language that conflated men with all humanity, so too did they use language that made whiteness the norm for womanhood.

²³⁹ Nancy Leys Stepan, “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science,” *Isis*, 77:2 (June 1986): 263.

had the intellectual capacity for the duties of citizenship and their bodies were designed by nature for other purposes. Bitterly noting the frequent critiques of American slavery and race relations lodged by the British, he fired back that they could not possibly understand the natural order of race demonstrated in the United States when England was a country whose natural order of gender had been turned upside down by having a woman as their leader. Appalled, he protested, “A woman is the chief of the nation, whose husband is her subject—thus violating the relations of the sexes—of husband and wife—and thrusting her from the normal position of woman as well as contradicting the relations and duties of citizenship.” His characterization of Queen Victoria echoed both scientific discourse on the “woman question” and the racial paternalism he demonstrated throughout his writings:

God created her, adapted her, and designed her, for a wife and a mother, a help-mate to her husband and the teacher and guide of her children; He endowed her with corresponding instincts to love, venerate, and obey her husband and devote her life to the happiness and welfare of her offspring, and to trample on His laws—to smother these instincts and force this woman to be a queen, a chief of state, the ruler over millions of men, is as sinful as it is irrational, as great an outrage on herself—her womanhood—as it is on the people who suffer from it.

Van Evrie warned, “Human law, disregarding the evident designs of the Almighty, has impiously sought to make her a different and superior being, to reverse the natural relations of the sexes.”²⁴⁰ The United States had best take heed of the example Queen Victoria represented, Van Evrie argued, and preserve the natural relations of sex as well as the natural relations of race. Nature itself mandated white male leaders and voters alike.

²⁴⁰ John Van Evrie, White Supremacy and Negro Subordination; Or, Negroes a subordinate race, and (so-called) slavery its normal condition (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1868), 185. White Supremacy is largely a reprint of his 1861 Negroes and Negro “Slavery” under a new title. He added new illustrations

Conclusion

In the second half of the nineteenth century, ethnology was increasingly a science with avowed political aims and political influence. Sex and gender were central to ethnological considerations of politically contentious issues like slavery and citizenship, and thus ethnology's more explicit engagement with both gender and politics in the shadow of the Civil War were mutually dependent. Differences of sex could be used to bolster ethnologists' claims about differences of race, first to defend slavery as natural, then to justify continued racial inequities after slavery's demise. Facing threats to white male dominance from feminist agitators and a vastly expanded free black population, ethnologists became deeply invested in defending the existing racial and gender hierarchy as biologically determined. Without slavery to structure racial hierarchy, postbellum ethnologists looked instead to sex and gender to prevent the full inclusion of black people in American social and political domains. If black bodies did not fit ethnologists' standards of sex, they need not be afforded the many rights and protections associated with gender. Ethnologists constructed the gendered standard of separate spheres as a white privilege; white men alone could vote, and only white women needed to be protected from labor and exploitation.

Toward the end of Reconstruction and into the Redemption period, the issue of black male suffrage remained potent, but how ethnologists approached the subject changed, largely in response to the enormous advancements African-Americans made following the Civil War. Black men rushed to the polls, with the active involvement of their female family members, and served in elected positions in unprecedented numbers.

and 60 pages to the end of the book, however, in the form of appendices and a new conclusion that

African-Americans opened businesses, schools, and their own Churches throughout the South, and a small but highly visible middle class emerged. In other words, ethnologists were faced with overwhelming evidence against their claims about black inferiority. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, ethnologists began to refocus their argument from black men being incapable of political participation to black men being undeserving of the franchise, on the grounds that they were by nature prone to crime and excess. In the context of evolutionary theory's growing popularity in the United States, comparisons between women and the "lower races" became more frequent in ethnology. But sexuality and sexual instincts joined sex and gender as markers of racial difference in late nineteenth-century ethnology; the obedient and child-like black man was rewritten as a savage, libidinous beast and black women's reproduction was no longer indicative of the health of the slave system, it was a threat to white dominance.

incorporated the reality of Emancipation into Van Evrie's continued defense of chattel slavery.

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG. I.—Page 135.



FIG. II.—Page 136.



FIG. III.—Page 136.



FIG. IV.—Page 136.



Figure 2.1. Frontispiece, Negroes and Negro "Slavery" (John Van Evrie, 1861)

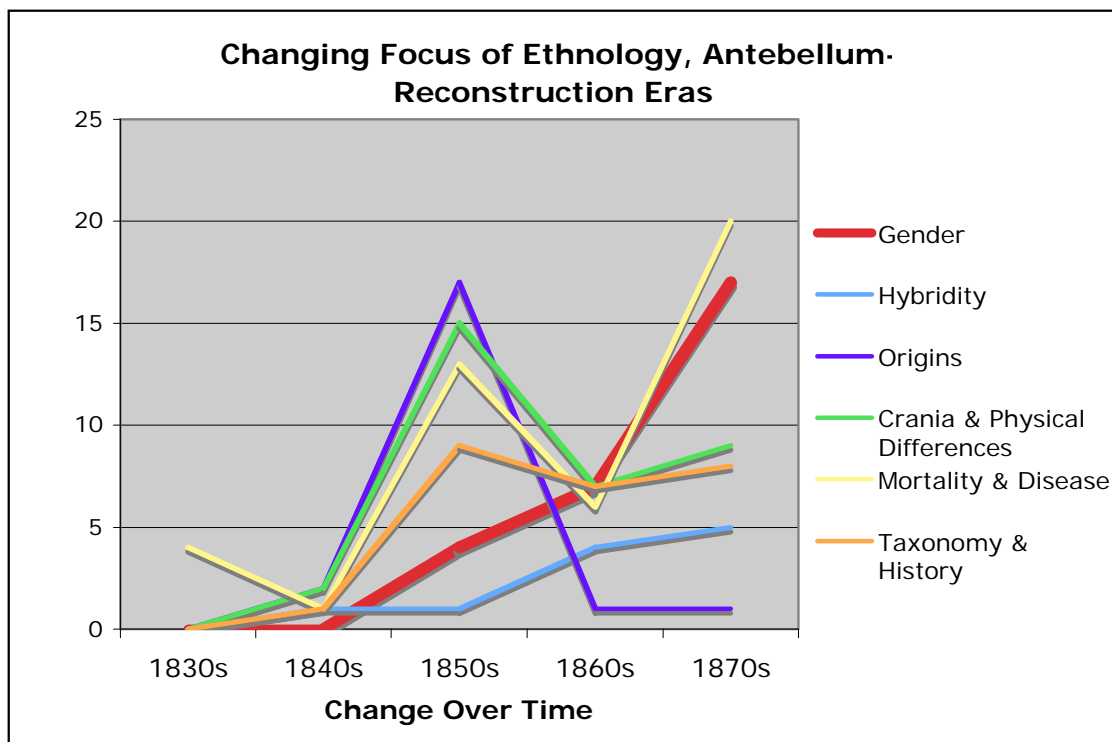


Figure 2.2. Changing Focus of Racial Science Texts, 1830-1879, Graph by author. Data based on the Index-Catalog of the National Library of Medicine; see appendix for methodology.

Latin description of a NEGRESS, written early in the second century after c.

“Interdum clamat Cybalen; erat unica custos;
Afra genus, tota patriam testante figura;
Torta comam, labroque tumens, et fusca colorem;
Pectore lata, jacens mammis, compressor alvo,
Cruribus exilis, spatiosa prodiga planta;
Continuis rimis calcanea scissa rigeabant.”

“In the meanwhile he calls Cybale. She was his only [house-] keeper. African by race, her whole face attesting her father-land: with crisped hair, swelling lip, and blackish complexion; broad in chest, with pendant dugs, [and] very contracted paunch; her spindle-shanks [contrasted with her] enormous feet; and her cracked heels were stiffened by perpetual clefts.”

Egyptian delineation of a NEGRESS, cut and painted some 1600 years before the Latin description.

FIG. 177.



Figure 2.3. Illustration, Types of Mankind (Josiah Nott, 1854)

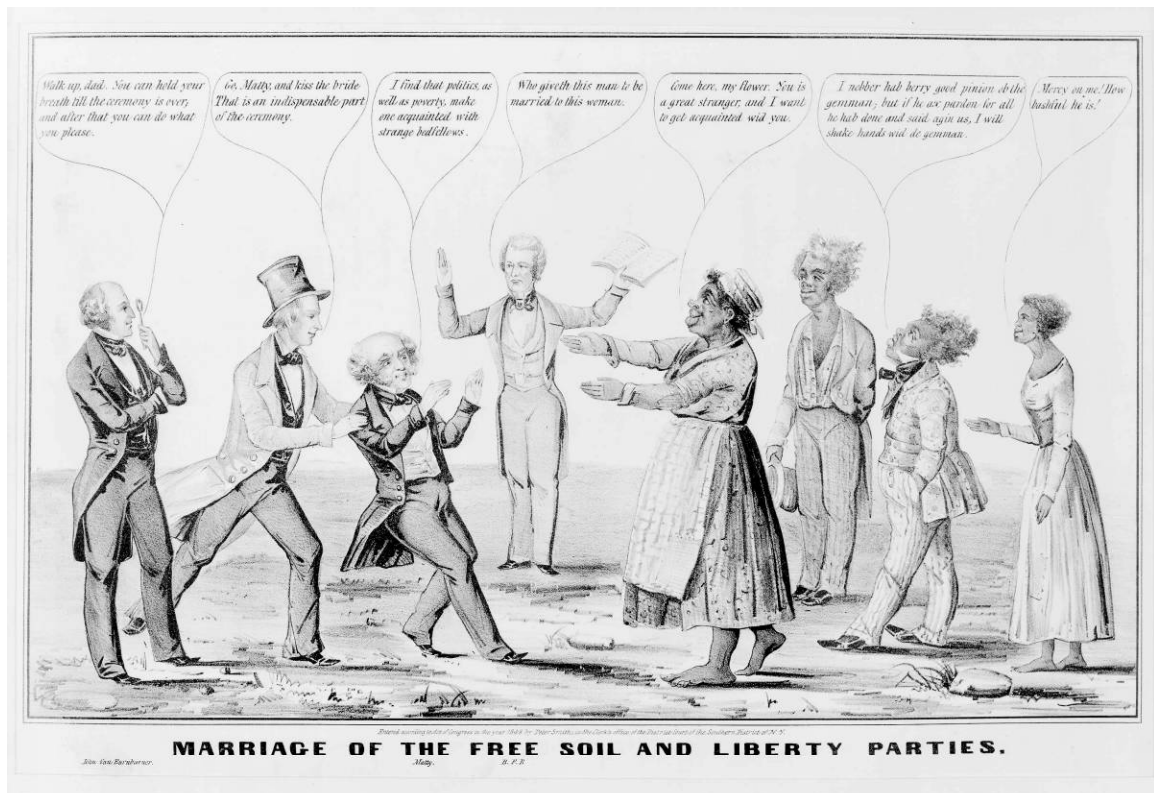


Figure 2.4. “Marriage of the Free Soil and Liberty Parties,” HarpWeek—American Political Prints, 1766-1876 (<http://loc.harpweek.com>)

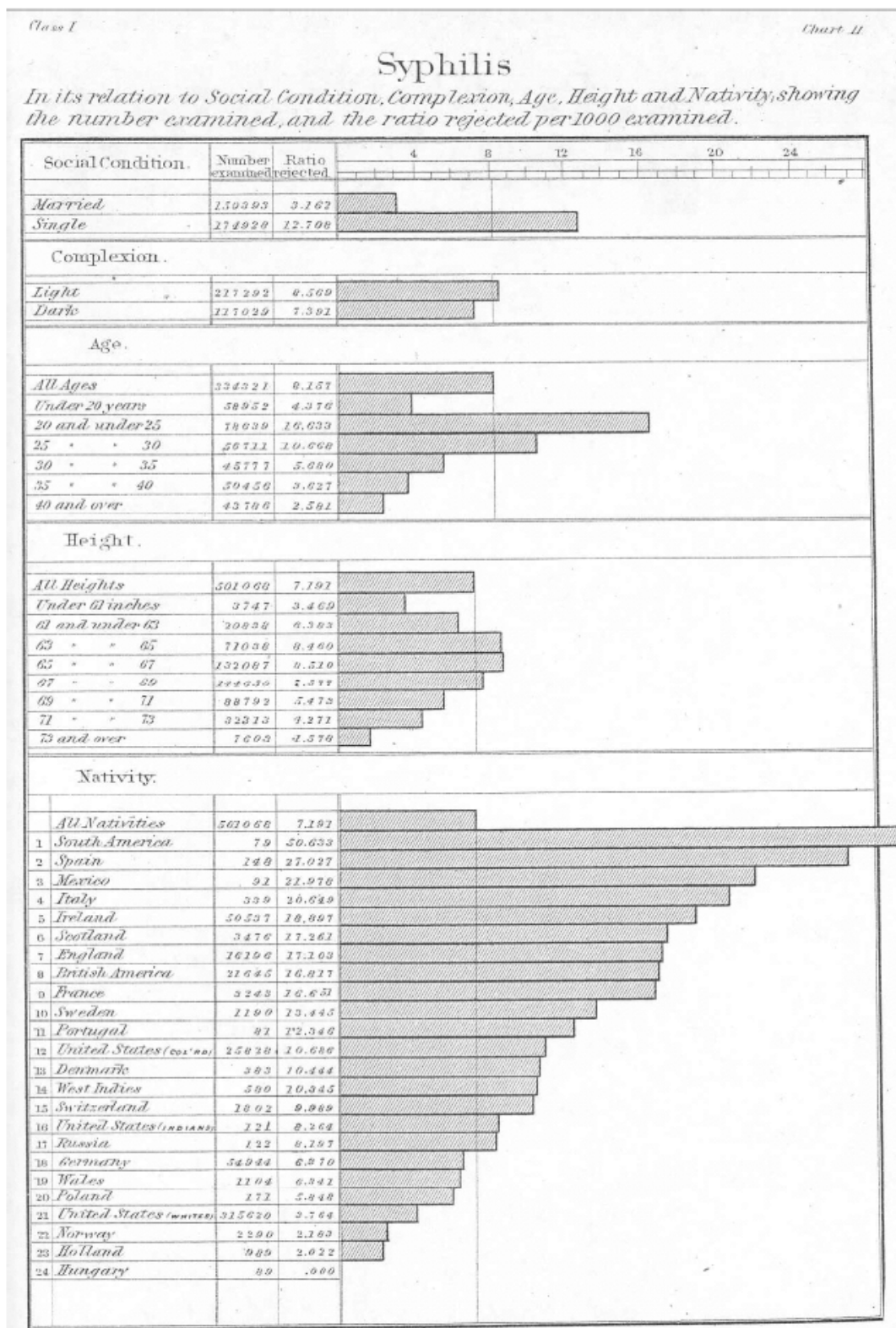


Figure 2.5. “Syphilis,” Statistics, medical and anthropological, of the Provost-Marshall-General’s Bureau (1875)

The eighth paragraph of the circular requested from the surgeon an opinion as to which nativity furnished the most capable soldier. In one hundred selected reports, the preference is expressed—

- By 75 for Americans;
- By 9 for Germans;
- By 8 for Irishmen;
- By 2 for Englishmen;
- By 2 for Canadians;
- By 1 for Scotchmen;
- By 3 for colored men.

Figure 2.6. “Nativity of the most capable soldier,” Statistics, medical and anthropological, of the Provost-Marshall-General’s Bureau (J.H. Baxter, 1875)



Figure 2.7. “The Two Platforms,” HarpWeek—American Political Prints, 1766-1876 (<http://loc.harpweek.com>)



Figure 2.8. Illustrations, The Six Species of Men (John Van Evrie, 1866)

SECTION TWO: BODILY THREATS, THREATENING BODIES

Chapter Three—Inverts, Perverts, and Primitives: Racial Thought and the American School of Sexology

In May 1890, Chicago physician and professor of genito-urinary surgery G. Frank Lydston declared, “In my opinion it is to the physician, and not to the moralist or law-maker, that the society of the future is to look for measure of repression or the better correction and prevention of vice and crime.”²⁴¹ He noted, “There are many illustrations of crime committed as a consequence of inherent sexual perversion.”²⁴² The perversions that received his most frequent and sustained attention were homosexuality, inversion, and “hermaphroditism.”²⁴³ In particular, he struggled to map the relationship between these categories—the extent to which they were distinct, related, or overlapping. Typical of late nineteenth-century scientists, he viewed sexual variance as pathological and thus looked to the body for clues, particularly “malformations of the sexual organs with or without associated close approximation to the general physique of the opposite sex, male

²⁴¹ G. Frank Lydston, “Materialism Versus Sentiment in the Study of the Causes and Correction of Crime,” Addresses and Essays, 2nd Edition (Louisville, KY: Renz and Henry, 1892), 94. The essay derives from a speech Lydston gave before the Kentucky State Medical Society.

²⁴² Lydston, “Materialism Versus Sentiment in the Study of the Causes and Correction of Crime,” 106.

²⁴³ While the terms “hermaphroditism” and “hermaphrodite” have fallen out of favor today, with “intersex” or “intersexed” the preferred usage today, I use the former terminology here to denote the scientists’ language and the context in which it was originally used. I use the terms “mulatto” and “sexual perversion” here in the same vein. “Inversion” was a popular concept in late nineteenth and early twentieth century science and medicine. It referred to a range of gender deviance, and may or may not include physical indicators. And indeed, scientists looked hard for and had a rather amorphous definition of what such indicators could be—a woman’s “square face,” “flattened labia,” “coarse voice,” and so forth). Scientists often described inversion as a female soul trapped in a male body or vice versa. “Inversion” and “psychical hermaphroditism” generally referred to the same thing in scientific discourse during this period. However, scientists’ concept of “inversion” generally stopped short of complete physical intersexuality, which they usually defined as a distinct category, “hermaphroditism” or “pseudo-hermaphroditism.” In most scientists’ usage at the time, hermaphroditism referred to individuals with functional male and female genitalia and pseudo-hermaphroditism to individuals with some mixture of primary and secondary sex characteristics of both sexes but with one sex predominating and/or diminished functionality of the other; however, to confuse matters even more, some scientists used the terms interchangeably, or did not use the latter at all. Homosexual acts or relationships were seen as a natural but not universal component of inversion; as we will see, many scientists argued that not all homosexuals were inverts and the term “homosexual” was indeed in usage by the 1880s, as was the term “lesbian.”

or female.”²⁴⁴ Also among the causes of vice and crime were “defective physique and imperfectly developed intellect, hereditary or congenital.” The racial connotations are difficult to miss.²⁴⁵ For nearly a century, ethnologists had been arguing that the “lower races” were permanently and pervasively deficient in both body and mind. Innate sexual deviance was prominent among the deficiencies to which scientists pointed, with aggressive hypersexuality attached to the black race in particular—an argument Lydston himself made in his Sexual Crimes Among the Southern Negroes [1893], discussed at length in the next chapter.

Moreover, such deficiencies were not just of scientific interest, they threatened the safety and order of society writ large. Indeed, Lydston posited a dynamic relationship between the “human body” and the “social body,” in which corruption in one entity could jeopardize the other. Undermined by racial and sexual contagions, America’s “social body” was ailing. To protect it, Lydston brought to bear all of the resources of the turn-of-the-century medical and scientific establishment, including social hygiene, ethnology, criminal anthropology, eugenics, and sexology. These overlapping sciences of difference were weapons in the arsenal to defend the social body by interrogating and controlling human bodies.

Lydston’s professional interests and driving concerns were characteristic of turn-of-the-century American scientists. Throughout his long and prolific career, he wrote and lectured on varied but intersecting topics, including sex education for children, the dangers of masturbation, venereal disease, immigration, sexual crime, lynching, miscegenation, homosexuality, and hermaphroditism. Recent scholarship by Siobhan

²⁴⁴ G. Frank Lydston, Addresses and Essays, 2nd Edition (Louisville, KY: Renz and Henry, 1892), 257.

Somerville, Jennifer Terry, and Lisa Duggan, among others, has revealed important parallels and connections between ethnology and sexology in this period. Lydston's career, however, underscores the fact that racial science and sexology were not separate fields in the United States. Not only did they share similar concerns and cultural politics, they were literally populated by the same key scientists. Sociologist Janice Irvine defines sexology loosely as the scientific study of sex, "an umbrella term denoting the activity of a multidisciplinary group of researchers, clinicians, and educators concerned with sexuality."²⁴⁶ In the United States at the turn of the century, this multidisciplinary group was largely composed of scientists like Lydston who were also working on race and social hygiene. White scientists often bolstered their claims about racial difference and hierarchy by insisting that the "lower races" deviated from white norms of gender performance, bodily sex, and sexual behavior. Predictably, when they turned their attention to deviances of gender, sex, or sexuality, they often read these differences through the lens of race. This chapter, then, will explore both ideological and institutional convergences between racial and sexual science in turn-of-the-century America.

The overlapping sciences of difference that Lydston exemplified were driven by racial, class, and gender anxieties, themselves fueled by enormous social upheaval. As Gail Bederman has shown, turn-of-the-century economic changes, immigration dynamics, labor unrest, and black and women's rights organizing challenged the social and political power of white middle-class men, who in response engaged in a complex process of "remaking manhood." In part, they worried that civilized society had made

²⁴⁵ Lydston, "Materialism Versus Sentiment in the Study of the Causes and Correction of Crime," 102.

²⁴⁶ Janice Irvine, *Disorders of Desire: Sex and Gender in Modern American Sexology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 2.

white men weak and effeminate, leaving them vulnerable to competition from working class, immigrant, and black men as well as white middle-class women. As part of this process of remaking manhood, many white men began to move away from earlier ideals of masculine restraint and refinement toward a celebration of virility and brute strength—characteristics they simultaneously feared, loathed, and envied in lower class and racially “primitive” men. This new, often contradictory definition of white manhood hinged on its opposition to all things feminine, but it also connected male dominance and racial dominance.²⁴⁷ Many whites believed the races were in a Darwinian struggle for survival in which reproduction was key, while evolutionary theorists also argued that distinct gender roles and distinctly sexed bodies marked higher evolutionary stages. The disruption to gender norms posed by homosexuality and “inversion” among whites thus threatened both white manhood and the white race as a whole. An overwhelmingly white and male group, American scientists like Lydston had a vested interest in maintaining existing gender, racial, and sexual hierarchies.

Lydston found his ideal case study in a hermaphroditic mulatto cook who engaged in sex with men and women. The “spurious hermaphrodite” had “an affinity for women, as illustrated by the fact that he contracted a gonorrhea in the normal manner,” Lydston explained. But he also “had a predilection for the passive role in the act of copulation, demonstrated by the fact that a number of young lads, ranging from ten to seventeen years of age...contracted from him typical gonorrhea, from which several of them came under my care.”²⁴⁸ That the cook could perform the role of the male

²⁴⁷ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-44.

²⁴⁸ Lydston, 257.

penetrator and the passive penetrated female seemed to provoke both awe and trepidation. The cook occupied a threateningly intermediate space in every possible way, confounding the binaries of male/female, homosexual/heterosexual, black/white. Moreover, the cook's intermediate sex, gender, race, and sexuality were all linked in Lydston's account. In his other writings and those of his scientific contemporaries, the "mulatto" embodied perhaps the most socially threatening "sexual perversion" of all, miscegenation.²⁴⁹ The subject in question also fit seamlessly with their racialized and class-conscious characterization of both sexual predation and venereal disease in other works. This mulatto, hermaphroditic, and seemingly bisexual (in the current sense of the word) cook performed considerable ideological work for the scientist. This one figure, who Lydston revisited in several publications, brought together salient turn-of-the-century discourses on race, gender, sexuality, miscegenation, disease, and crime.²⁵⁰

Lydston's fascination with the "spurious hermaphrodite" also sheds light on the nature of turn-of-the-century American sexology and the racial context in which such work was produced. For one, it reveals the extent to which intermediacy provided a framework for scientific considerations of race, gender, sex, and sexuality. In a society where social and political institutions were structured around binaries, it was the spaces in between that fascinated and loomed most dangerous to scientists. Second, the cook's

²⁴⁹ For example, Chicago physician and psychiatrist James Kiernan identified black men's supposed proclivity for raping white women as a highly dangerous form of perversion, while Louisiana physician Augustin Himel pointed to "young white men cohabiting with negro women" as a sexual transgression of critical interest to both psychologists and lawmen. James Kiernan, "Sexual Perversion, and the Whitechapel Murders," *The Medical Standard*, 4:5 (December 1888): 171; Augustin Himel, "Some Minor Studies in Psychology, with Special Reference to Masturbation," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*, 60:6 (December 1907): 440-441.

²⁵⁰ See for example, G. Frank Lydston, "Chapter XXI. Aberrant and Imperfect Differentiation of Sex," in *The Surgical Diseases of the Genito-Urinary Tract: Venereal and Sexual Diseases, a Text-book for Students and Practitioners, Revised Edition* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1905, 1899), 517.

venereal infection made literal the link scientists drew between sexual variance and both individual disease and social contagion, which in turn opened new possibilities for scientific authority over America's ills. Third, like ethnology, American sexology was concerned with classifying difference, but the categories themselves sparked considerable debate. The ambivalence Lydston exhibited about the relationship between sexual object choice and nonconformist gender performance or bodily sex was typical of the field. While historians often discuss a turn-of-the-century shift in scientific discourse from the concept of sexual inversion to that of homosexuality, this shift has been overstated.²⁵¹ The two concepts, as well as the terminology, existed concurrently. Finally, scientists' assessments of the causes of "sexual perversion" often broke down along racial lines. They frequently linked genital abnormalities to bodies that were already marked as racially suspect—African-Americans, mixed race people, and "undesirable" immigrants. Meanwhile, "sexual perversion" in the same population was often characterized as vice and as indicative of the physical and moral degeneracy of the group. In contrast, scientists usually read cases of "sexual perversion" in middle and upper class whites as symptomatic of individual pathology or disease, which many attributed to "overcivilization." While the "lower races" threatened moral corruption by spreading their sexual vice, white homosexuals from respectable families threatened "race suicide." Lydston's work, particularly his story of the cook, illustrates that sexual and racial threats were linked, if not rhetorically interchangeable, in American scientists' construction of a vulnerable social body.

²⁵¹ On a shift from "inversion" to "homosexuality" in Western scientific and cultural thought, see especially George Chauncey, "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: The Changing Medical Conceptualization of Female 'Deviance'" in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, eds. Kathy Peiss and

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American sexology, of which Lydston was representative, developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century in the context of pervasive racial anxieties among scientists. For one, the nascent eugenics movement, which aimed to produce a “superior race” by promoting the reproduction of “desirable” races or groups while limiting the fertility of “less desirables,” prompted support for scientific studies of sex. Similarly, concerns over prostitution and venereal disease—which moral reformers usually associated with immigrants, African-Americans, and the working class—lent some degree of legitimacy and social import to sexology as well.²⁵²

Moreover, racial science had become increasingly concerned with issues of sex and sexuality during the era of “Redemption.” Black men were cast as a sexual threat in the South and much of the scientific writing on race and sex during this period—including work by Lydston and his Chicago colleague, physician and psychiatrist James Kiernan, as well as prolific sexologist, naturalist, and retired U.S. military surgeon R.W. Shufeldt—focused on “furor sexualis,” a biological imperative that drove black men to rape white women.²⁵³

Christina Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, The Epistemology of the Closet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

²⁵² Jennifer Terry, An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), 27-39 and 74-119.

²⁵³ Lydston articulated an influential model of the causes and symptoms of “furor sexualis” in his 1893 publication, Sexual Crimes Among the Southern Negroes, which the next chapter will take up in detail. Miscegenation and “furor sexualis” were among the many topics Shufeldt addresses in his two sexually charged, book-length harangues against the black race; see R.W. Shufeldt, The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization (Boston: Richard G. Badger/The Gotham Press, 1907) and America’s Greatest Problem: the Negro (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915).

Meanwhile, concerns over immigration and the impact of evolutionary theory in late nineteenth-century science gave rise to new concepts of intermediacy in regards to both sex and race. Evolutionary theorists measured the stage of a race in part by its degree of sexual differentiation and pitted the races in a struggle for survival that hinged on reproduction. And whereas earlier ethnology was literally black and white in its focus, turn-of-the-century racial scientists also turned their attention to other races. Scientists typically described these races as inhabiting a racial and evolutionary middle ground between black and white, but often portrayed them as sexually intermediate as well. Scientists were focused on racial intermediacy in another regard too; white scientists now painted miscegenation as a threat to American civilization. The topic became ubiquitous in late nineteenth and early twentieth century science and interpretations of racial mixture changed markedly after it was no longer a profitable, though largely unspoken dimension of slavery. Whereas earlier ethnology tended to argue that mixture between whites and blacks produced “sterile hybrids” and was thus incapable of producing a new “permanent stock,” miscegenation in turn-of-the-century racial science was represented as a polluting force that would degenerate both races physically and culturally.²⁵⁴

But homosexuality and other “sexual perversions” were linked to these racial concerns as well. On the one hand, homosexuality, onanism (masturbation), prostitution, and other so-called perversions among whites threatened “race suicide” by diverting sexual activity from its true purpose—reproduction. On the other hand, such activities,

²⁵⁴ On scientific and popular discourse on miscegenation at the turn of the century, see Avtar Brah and Annie Coombes, eds., Hybridity and its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture (New York: Routledge, 2000); Abby Ferber, White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Kevin Mumford, Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Joel Williamson, New People:

which were linked in scientific discourse to a host of ailments, particularly neuresthenia, also threatened to weaken the race in subsequent generations.²⁵⁵ At the same time, scientists interpreted sexual perversion in the “lower races”—typically, African Americans as well as immigrants from Asia and southern and eastern Europe—as further evidence of their physically and morally degenerate nature and thus their inherent propensity for “vice.” Finally, ethnologists’ evolutionary method of examining and ranking bodies extended beyond race to color the way scientists viewed other “deviant” bodies—even when obvious physical differences could not be found. By the late nineteenth-century, this framework was firmly entrenched in scientific thought and discourse, which had also begun to turn its attention towards matters of sex and social hygiene.

In order to find the key players in American sexology, then, one need look no further than the successors of the American school of ethnology—a fact that has been largely overlooked by scholars who have begun to explore the ideological links between ethnology and sexology. Their work has tended to ignore American scientists like Lydston who inhabited both fields in favor of focusing on European sexologists or the reception of these theorists in the United States. Scholarship on sexology prior to Alfred Kinsey in the 1940s and 1950s tends to assume that American scientists merely followed Europeans such as Karl Westphal, Richard Von Krafft-Ebing, Albert Moll, Karl Ulrichs,

Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Bederman, 1-44; and Fredrickson, 288-282.

²⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis of the concept of “race suicide” and its place in turn-of-the-century scientific and cultural discourse, see Bederman, 199-215, and Louise Michele Newman, White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 144-149. On “race suicide” in black thought, see Michele Mitchell, Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld, and Edward Carpenter. Thus, early American scientific work on homosexuality and inversion remains under-examined in comparison, though that has begun to change.²⁵⁶ Many historians credit German physician Iwan Bloch with formally introducing the concept of a serious field devoted to the scientific study of sexuality, what he termed *sexualwissenschaft* (translated as sexology), in his 1907 The Sexual Life of Our Time. Yet well-known scientific studies of sex and “sex perversion” began to be published over thirty years earlier in both Europe and the United States and the term “sexology” was already in use as well. In a 1905 article, “The Medico-Legal Consideration of Perverts and Inverts,” R.W. Shufeldt pleaded for scientists studying sex to be taken seriously as scientists, disinterested, high-minded and socially concerned, rather than persecuted as prurient and, even worse, prosecuted for violating arcane

“Race suicide” and scientific discussions of homosexuality will be addressed at greater length later in this chapter.

²⁵⁶ Indeed, even in historical scholarship that is otherwise focused on the United States, early work on sexuality by American scientists like Lydston, Kiernan, and Shufeldt remains largely overshadowed by that of their European counterparts. Irvine, for instance, traces the rise of sexology in Europe in her introduction to Disorders of Desire: Sex and Gender in Modern American Sexology, but begins the body of her text on American sexology with the Kinsey studies in the 1940s and 1950s. American scientists writing during the height of European sexology do not figure into the background story she provides; only Katherine Bement Davis, working in the United States during the 1920s, receives some discussion later in the text. Irvine is hardly alone, however, in her narrative of sexology’s history. It has become a standard narrative to locate early sexology in Europe, with U.S. contributions to the field beginning with Kinsey. For example, that omnipresent measure of popular knowledge, Wikipedia, lists no American scientist prior to Kinsey in its article on sexology. Chauncey’s “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: The Changing Medical Conceptualization of Female ‘Deviance’” and Terry’s An American Obsession constitute notable exceptions that do discuss late nineteenth and early twentieth century work on homosexuality by American scientists. Terry in particular makes a number of astute comparisons between this U.S. literature and European sexology (pages 74-119). However, she too conveys a predominately one way chain of influence, positioning American scientists as writing largely in response to their European counterparts, noting, for example, “Although the foundational etiological theories of homosexuality were developed primarily by European physicians, they were elaborated upon by American doctors in a fashion that highlights particular political dynamics in American culture during the decades surrounding the turn of the century” (74). Though she examines the theories of prominent European sexologists at length (see especially pages 40-73), Lydston and Kiernan, two of the most prolific writers on homosexuality and inversion in turn-of-the-century America, receive mention on only two pages each.

indecentry statutes.²⁵⁷ “Speaking for this country alone,” Shufeldt rued that the “all important science of sexology” did not adequately reach students of medicine and law, for whom such knowledge was vitally important.²⁵⁸

To be sure, there is a rich, and quite extensive, body of scholarship that examines the construction of homosexuality during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, specifically, the role of science in that complex project. Jonathan Ned Katz, for example, argues that only was homosexuality invented in the nineteenth century (largely by sexologists), so too was heterosexuality, the latter defined against—and thus dependent on—the former.²⁵⁹ While the scholarly treatments of European sexology are too numerous to list here, several works have also addressed early American scientific discourse on homosexuality. Ronald Bayer’s Homosexuality and American Psychiatry and Henry Minton’s Departing from Deviance address homosexuals’ engagement with and challenges to the scientists who study them; both have complicated my understanding of the dynamic between science and its subjects.²⁶⁰ George Chauncey and Henry Abelove’s foundational articles, “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality” and “Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans,” respectively, have shed considerable light on the gender politics at play in turn-of-the-century American sexual science.²⁶¹ Race does not play a large role in these analyses, however.

²⁵⁷ R.W. Shufeldt, “The Medico-Legal Consideration of Perverts and Inverts,” Pacific Medical Journal, 48 (1905): 385-393.

²⁵⁸ Shufeldt, “The Medico-Legal Consideration of Perverts and Inverts,” 386.

²⁵⁹ Jonathan Ned Katz, The Invention of Heterosexuality, New Ed edition (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007).

²⁶⁰ Ronald Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, 1981) and Henry Minton, Departing from Deviance: A History of Homosexual Rights and Emancipatory Science in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

²⁶¹ Henry Abelove, “Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans,” Eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Barale, and David Halperin, The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader (New York: Routledge, 1993), 381-396.

In recent years, scholars such as Lisa Duggan, Siobhan Somerville, and Jennifer Terry have begun to address this gap, examining the complex relationship between the sciences of race and the sciences of gender and sexuality during this period. Though focused on American race relations, both Duggan and Somerville write primarily about European sexologists in their texts. Ironically, it is perhaps because turn-of-the-century U.S. scientists of sex were so enmeshed in racial science that they tend to be invisible. In looking to draw parallels between two fields that were not actually separate or distinct in the United States, scholars have instead juxtaposed European sexology with American ethnology. Terry, in contrast, looks more extensively at American scientific work on homosexuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but often in reaction to European sexology.²⁶² This chapter builds on all of these important works, among others, but what I am most interested in here is the indigenous genealogy of American sexology—how these scientists’ investigations into homosexuality and inversion represented a logical turn in the gendered trajectory of racial science I laid out in Section

²⁶² Terry begins her exhaustive study, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society*, by contextualizing American sexology within a history of racial science, social hygiene, and biological paradigms of human difference. While race is not her primary project, she lays an excellent foundation for further exploration of the interplay between racial science and sexology, a call that Duggan and Somerville heeded—although largely without her attention to early American sexologists. In *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity*, Duggan juxtaposes the lynching narrative and what she calls the “lesbian love murder narrative,” linked by time, place, and their similar portrayals in the media and scientific discourse.²⁶² Duggan also points out that in both cases, threats to white masculinity—and by implication, to white male dominance in society—were perceived in specifically sexual terms, threatening to usurp white male sexual privilege. Similarly, Somerville has revealed a variety of parallels between ethnology and sexology and demonstrates how racial thought informed new conceptualizations of homosexuality at the turn-of-the-century. However, despite the U.S. racial context that grounds her study, she ultimately focuses her analysis on European sexologists and their reception in the United States rather than on the work of American scientists themselves. See Lisa Duggan, *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) and Siobhan Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

One of the dissertation, and how the distinctive history of U.S. race relations produced a distinctly American sexual science.²⁶³

Although European sexologists were indeed widely read, reprinted, and cited in the United States, it would be a mistake to assume a one-way chain of influence. Late nineteenth-century American and European scientists wrote about sex concurrently and cited each other's work. Kiernan's work featured prominently in Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis, for example, while Lydston claimed that Ellis preferred his sexual classification system to Krafft-Ebing's.²⁶⁴ And U.S. scientists cited each other as well as European sexologists. American physician Allan McLane Hamilton noted in 1896 that the work of "Krafft-Ebing, Moll, Chaddock, and numerous continental and American writers" had given sexuality "a definite place in modern psychological medicine."²⁶⁵ Moreover, they were also familiar with each other's case studies, as can be seen when Kiernan, recounting a case study of a cross-dressing man, remarked, "Cases of this types have been reported in Europe by Krafft-Ebing, Schminkit, Scholz, and Gock, and in America by Spitzka, Shaw, C.K. Mills, Blumer, and Wise."²⁶⁶ While U.S. scientists definitely saw themselves as part of a transatlantic conversation on sex and "sexual perversion," Americans like Shufeldt and Lydston are now far more likely to appear in scholarship on race than on sex—if discussed at all. This lacuna has not only obscured

²⁶³ I thank Marc Stein for his invaluable insights here and particularly his language of "indigenous genealogy."

²⁶⁴ See Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis, With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study Revised [12th] edition, F.J. Rebman, trans. (New York: Medical Art Agency, 1992), 48, 218, 344, 438, and 471, and Lydston, The Surgical Diseases of the Genito-Urinary Tract: Venereal and Sexual Diseases, 530-531.

²⁶⁵ Allan McLane Hamilton, "The Civil Responsibility of Sexual Perverts," American Journal of Insanity, 4 (April 1896), 504. Charles Gilbert Chaddock was an American neurologist who translated an early edition of Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis into English.

²⁶⁶ Kiernan, "Sexual Perversion, and the Whitechapel Murders," 170.

early American contributions to sexology, but also the extent to which the field was driven by the country's unique racial history.

Indeed, sexology in America grew into a distinct scientific field, separate from racial science, far later than in Europe. While European sexology also had roots in social hygiene and eugenics, it quickly developed into a discipline of its own, with institutes focused on sexuality and scientists self-identifying primarily as sex scholars. U.S. research on sex and sexuality in contrast remained firmly entrenched in the racial sciences and medicine during the same period, just as individual U.S. scientists themselves continued to work in a range of disciplines premised on human difference.²⁶⁷ European scientific thought did have a profound effect on American work on sexuality, but social Darwinism may well have been more directly influential in shaping this work than the writings of European sexologists.²⁶⁸

Moreover, a greater proportion of European sexology was somewhat sympathetic to the plight of the homosexual or invert and hoped that scientific analysis could promote understanding in society, though as we shall see such attitudes were certainly represented

²⁶⁷ It is also worth noting that the vast majority of sexological writing in the United States appeared in article form in medical and psychiatric journals, unlike European sexologists who often published book-length studies, as Jennifer Terry also observes (75). As discussed earlier, Shufeldt hinted at the likely reason for this difference: American scientists could face obscenity charges for their explicit discussions of sexuality, despite their insistence on its scientific legitimacy and social value, and thus their work was largely targeted to other physicians. For example, the sale of the trilogy of books penned by a self-professed invert (discussed later in this chapter), the publication of which was facilitated by physician Alfred Herzog and contained photographs by Shufeldt, was restricted to medical and legal professionals.

²⁶⁸ Evolutionary theory and social Darwinism took hold later in the United States than in Europe. Evolution in general was resisted on religious grounds, and its application to human beings resisted because of the challenges it represented to the theory of polygenesis. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, it was nearly ubiquitous in American cultural, political, and scientific discourse. On the integration of evolutionary theory into American race science in the late nineteenth century, see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 228-255; John S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); and Joseph Graves, Jr., *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 53-104.

among American scientists as well, including Lydston. A number of European sexologists even wrote from an “insider” perspective; both Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, for example, openly placed themselves at the center of their studies of sexual nonconformity and homosexual desire. For a number of prominent European sexologists, explaining, cataloguing, and understanding the phenomena of human sexual difference was the end goal.

American sexology, however, was never fully divorced from practical concerns over what to do with the “sexual pervert,” to ameliorate his or her influence on the social body. Though American scientists shared with their European counterparts a medical and psychological framework for understanding homosexuality and inversion, criminal anthropology, eugenics, and, above all, social hygiene, were brought to bear on pressing questions about the relationship between “perverted” individuals and society as a whole. It is perhaps more useful, then, to think of these turn-of-the-century studies in the United States as a patchwork science of human difference, of which race and sexuality were both components.

The patchwork science that was the American school of sexology found its ideological home in Chicago in the late nineteenth century, with Lydston and Kiernan as its fathers. Chicago was home to a large social hygiene movement, an extremely active vice commission, and a thriving gay underground. Both Lydston and Kiernan resided and maintained clinical practices in Chicago and taught at its medical schools. As historian Chad Heap notes:

By the 1880s, they [Lydston and Kiernan] had made the city a center for American sexological studies, not only publishing reports on the “sexual perverts” they encountered in the course of their medical practice, but also supplying case studies of these patients to prominent European sexologists such

as Havelock Ellis. In the decade before the opening of the University of Chicago in 1892 (the same year the term homosexual first appeared in an American publication), they had begun to establish an intellectual environment where the study of sexual abnormality was seen as a proper, even urgent subject of academic inquiry.²⁶⁹

The University of Chicago, widely recognized as “the birthplace of urban sociology,” would also be at the forefront of American sexology.²⁷⁰ In Chicago and elsewhere, sexual vice was central to political and scientific discussions of urban problems, and debates raged as to whether such vice demanded medical or judicial interventions. Both Kiernan and Lydston employed a medical paradigm of sexual deviance. Kiernan nonetheless called for strict legal punishment while Lydston, a scientific paternalist throughout his career, urged greater understanding and pity for “perverts” and tended to favor prevention (though as we will see, few of Chicago’s “perverts” were likely to prefer Lydston’s preventative measure).²⁷¹ From the 1880s, American scientists writing on sexuality were as likely to reference Lydston and Kiernan as European sexologists like Ellis.

Refocusing our view specifically on the work of American sexologists is revealing in a number of ways. It demonstrates that U.S. scientists, while informed by and in dialogue with their well-known European colleagues, were not simply responding to knowledge produced overseas, but also concurrently developed a uniquely American concept of sexuality and sexual difference, shaped by the country’s racial context.

Indeed, America’s most well known “experts” on race were also its preeminent scholars

²⁶⁹ Chad Heap, with an introduction by George Chauncey, *Homosexuality in the City: A Century of Research at the University of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2000), 13. Kiernan himself was the first to use the term “homosexual” in print in America (see Heap, 9).

²⁷⁰ Heap, 6.

²⁷¹ For more on Lydston’s scientific paternalism as well as his oft-recommended “preventative” for perversion of varying stripes, see Chapter Four.

of sex. Moreover, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scientific work on race and on sex was not only produced by the same scientists, but also targeted the same audience. Scientific studies on the two issues were generally published in the same journals, often side by side, and many individual studies looked at race and sex together. For example, “The Psychology of Modesty and Clothing” (1899), an article by sociologist William I. Thomas, a colleague of Lydston and Kiernan at the University of Chicago, cited natural, racial, and sexual scientists, including Charles Darwin, a variety of European and U.S. ethnological studies of “primitive” peoples that applied Darwinian theory to human diversity, and British sexologist Havelock Ellis.²⁷² The article was immediately followed by a review of a new ethnology book, The Races of Europe, a review that compared scientific debates over racial difference to similar considerations of sex difference. “The social philosophy which attributes everything to environment is a black number: environment is only one of the conditions,” the reviewer wrote. “But the anthropologist who, on the other hand, would attribute everything to race is just as greatly in error. The question has become much like that with reference to the superiority of one or other of the sexes.”²⁷³ Kiernan himself offers another example. Under the column heading “Sexology” in The Urologic and Cutaneous Review, Kiernan penned two separate articles, one on homosexuality, “An Increase in American Inversion,” and the second entitled “Birth Control Among Primitive Peoples.”²⁷⁴

²⁷² William I. Thomas, “The Psychology of Modesty and Clothing,” American Journal of Sociology, 5 (1899): 246-262.

²⁷³ “Review: The Races of Europe. A Sociological Study. With Supplement containing a Bibliography of the Anthropology and Ethnology of Europe. By William Z. Ripley. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1899,” American Journal of Sociology, 5 (1899): 265.

²⁷⁴ James G. Kiernan, “Sexology—Increase in American Inversion. Birth Control Among Primitive Peoples,” Urologic and Cutaneous Review, 20 (1916): 44-49.

Lydston, Kiernan, and Shufeldt, then, rose to prominence at a time when scientific discussions of ethnology and sexology shared similar concerns about the nation's fate in the context of changing gender, sexual, and racial norms. Much of their concern about human evolution and white civilization were written onto the body. They worried that women's agitation for political rights, higher education, and social freedoms were affecting their biology, resulting in declining birth rates among middle-class whites at a time while immigrants, the poor, and an emancipated black population were reproducing in higher numbers. At the same time, they worried that growing numbers of white, middle-class men suffered from "neurasthenia," an amorphous condition brought on by an overly cerebral and decadent civilized life and marked by a weakened constitution and nervousness.²⁷⁵ "Not coincidentally, while some doctors were focusing their attention on the neurasthenic male body," Gail Bederman notes, "other physicians and medical investigators began to pay a great deal of attention to male homosexuals," which offered "one way to investigate, medicalize, and contain the wider social, cultural, and economic forces that threatened the potency of middle-class manhood."²⁷⁶

Homosexual women did not escape American scientists' notice either. On the contrary, female inverts also threatened middle-class manhood by usurping male privileges of employment, social deportment, and sexual dominion over women. Traditionally feminine women engaged in romantic friendships were accepted, even celebrated, because their relationships complemented rather than supplanted heterosexual marriage and their displays of emotion and sentimentality accorded with gender expectation of

²⁷⁵ For more on neurasthenia, see Bederman, 14 and 84-88.

²⁷⁶ Bederman, 15.

Victorian womanhood and domesticity.²⁷⁷ Masculine women who eschewed feminine pursuits and heterosexual marriage entirely, however, were labeled pathological “inverts,” who, like their male counterparts, threatened America’s social body. Likewise, scientists scrutinized the bodies of female inverts for biological evidence of their deviance, remarking on square jaws, broad foreheads, or coarse hair when no obvious genital anomaly could be found.²⁷⁸

Closely linked to their concerns about sexuality and civilization, scientists also worried about human evolution. As we have seen, scientific discussions of racial and sexual difference shared a common language and, often, similar central questions and debates. Evolutionary theory, which provided a conceptual framework for turn-of-the-century racial science, informed discussions of homosexuality and gender deviance as well. “Upon the perfection of the reproductive apparatus depends the position of the animal in the scale of evolution,” Kiernan noted in 1891, and thus the subject of sex had “important ethical aspects” for the march of civilization.²⁷⁹ As Kiernan alluded, an important dimension of evolutionary theory, and one that was consistently applied to

²⁷⁷ On “romantic friendships,” see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s classic essay, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Signs*, 1 (1975): 1-29.

²⁷⁸ Scientists were far more undecided over what to make of the feminine women with whom these “inverts” often developed relationships. Many scientists viewed them as passive victims of aggressively masculine predators, though over time scientists began to see them as suffering from sexual pathology as well. The possibility that same-sex intimacy might not correspond to deviant gender performance ultimately brought romantic friendships under scientific scrutiny as well, though they persisted with relatively little social approbation well after some scientists suggested that things might not always be as chaste as they seemed. See, in particular, Leila Rupp, *A Desired Past: Same-Sex Love in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 79-84, and Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999): 97-199. On scientific ideas about female homosexuality in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, see Chauncey, “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: The Changing Medical Conceptualization of Female ‘Deviance,’” 87-117. On women who fully “passed” and lived as men, see the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project, “‘She Even Chewed Tobacco’: A Pictorial Narrative of Passing Women in America,” *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, eds. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: Meridian Books, 1989), 183-194, and the affiliated documentary, *She Even Chewed Tobacco*, by Elizabeth Stevens and Estelle Freedman (1983).

discussions of race, held that sexual differentiation was a mark of evolutionary development. That is, the more distinct males and females were in both body and social role, the more evolved the race to which they belonged. By this standard, the “lower races” were often characterized as less evolved. For example, scientists pointed to black women’s labor and argued that they had muscular bodies and enlarged clitorises, while black men’s hairless bodies and “scanty beards” were taken as evidence of the race’s low evolutionary stage.²⁸⁰ In contrast, evolutionary theorists described Anglo-Saxons as the pinnacle of evolution. With white women at least in theory ensconced in the home, white men in public and political spaces, and their bodies polar opposites, they were the most sexually differentiated race. Kiernan applied the same logic to physical and psychical “inverts,” who were, in his estimation, an evolutionary throwback. He remarked, “It seems certain that a femininely functioning brain can occupy a male body, and vice versa. Males may be born with female external genitals and vice versa. The lowest animals are bisexual and the various types of hermaphroditism are more or less complete reversions to the ancestral type.”²⁸¹

Kiernan’s remarks are indicative of the evolutionary framework of early American sexology, the far-reaching significance attached to sexually normative bodies, and the social danger that sexual intermediacy represented. For decades following Kiernan’s influential work, other scientists also described homosexuals and inverts as “atavistic,” that their lack of sexual differentiation in body or behavior mirrored “the very

²⁷⁹ Kiernan, “Psychological Aspects of the Sexual Appetite,” 188

²⁸⁰ They did not, of course, note that white racism had always necessitated black women’s labor in the United States. On the racial significance of beards and body hair in American science, see Chapter Two.

²⁸¹ Kiernan makes the exact same argument—verbatim—in two different articles, published in 1888 and 1891. See Kiernan, “Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murder,” 130, and “Psychological Aspects of the Sexual Appetite,” 195 respectively.

remote beginnings of the biological development of the human species,” as New York City psychiatrist and psychoanalyst C.P. Oberndorf wrote in 1929.²⁸² The implications of this evolutionary regression were troubling for scientists. Following Kiernan’s lead, scientists worried that the rise in homosexuality and inversion they perceived among America’s middle and upper classes indicated that white civilization was beginning to degenerate. Indeed, in turn-of-the-century scientific thought, “degeneracy” could be used to characterize an early or stagnated stage of evolution—which scientists often linked to the “savage” races—but it could also mean an active process of devolution among the “civilized” races. That is, just as racial groups could evolve over time from savagery toward civilized perfection, so too could the process be reversed. Moreover, the role of the scientist was not just to understand evolutionary processes but also to help them along by mediating threats to white supremacy, whether the threat was in the form of intermixture with other races or degeneration from within.

As they did with other forms of “degeneracy”—criminality, pauperism, insanity, mental retardation—scientists often described homosexuality as a “hereditary taint” passed from one generation to the next. They typically began case studies with a detailed family history that highlighted any “bad blood” within the patient’s “stock,” especially other examples of homosexuality or “perversion.” Attempting to ascertain whether a specific patient demonstrated “a case of inherited or acquired homosexuality,” respected New York gynecologist and nationally-known sexologist Bernard Talmey declared that

²⁸²C.P. Oberndorf, “Diverse Forms of Homosexuality,” *The Urologic and Cutaneous Review* 33:8 (August 1929): 519. Along similar lines and published in the same issue of the *UCR*, see also John F.W. Meagher, “Homosexuality: Its Psychobiological and Psychopathological Significance,” *The Urologic and Cutaneous Review*, 33:8 (August 1929): 507.

the man's "entire clan was sexually tainted."²⁸³ Kiernan looked more generally for "neurotic ancestry" among his case studies, while William Lee Howard, a Baltimore physician and member of the New York-based Medico-Legal Society, noted that "ninety per cent of the cases of sexual perversion" he observed "show the stigmata of neuropaths and have histories of inherited unstable nervous organizations."²⁸⁴

As these discussions of "tainted heredity" suggest, while some scientists placed homosexuality and inversion among the causes of degeneracy, others saw them as symptomatic of degeneracy. In 1904, Howard argued that "with the increase of neuropathic individuals which our high pressure living is constantly producing," the courts would continue to see rising numbers of "sexual perverts" and "degenerate acts."²⁸⁵ In other words, civilization had perhaps advanced too far, creating disorders like neurasthenia that weakened individuals physically and morally; sexual deviance was just one among many manifestations. Looking to his European counterpart, he added, "As Krafft-Ebing says: 'Every anomaly must be described clinically as a functional sign of degeneration.'"²⁸⁶ Shufeldt also saw sexual variance as a manifestation of degeneracy, but through an explicitly eugenic perspective. Rather than linking degeneracy to the problems of over-civilization, he blamed bad breeding. In his 1905 "Medico Legal Consideration of Sexual Perverts," he posited, "The reason to account for the presence of such a vast number of psycho-sexual perverts and inverters among us is, that for untold generations in the past couples have given birth to children who have been anatomically,

²⁸³ Bernard S. Talmey, "Notes on Homosexuality," The Medico-Legal Journal, 34:8 (November/December 1917): 4.

²⁸⁴ James Kiernan, "Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murders," Medical Standard, 4:5 (November 1888): 171, and William Lee Howard, "Sexual Perversion in America," American Journal of Dermatology and Genito-Urinary Diseases, 8 (1904): 10.

²⁸⁵ Howard, "Sexual Perversion in America," 9.

physiologically and psychologically unfitted to bear them.” For Shufeldt, “Such mating stands responsible for present-day crime.”²⁸⁷

Meanwhile, some scientists cautioned against making any direct correlation between degeneracy, homosexuality, and inversion at all. Philadelphia-born physician and psychiatrist Isador H. Coriat, for example, wrote that “the loose term degeneration” could not “be used to explain these conditions, because many homosexuals do not show the slightest evidence of what are usually termed degenerative stigmata, and furthermore, many so called degenerates are absolutely free from symptoms of inverted sexuality.” Further challenging the congenital model of many of his American peers in favor of the psychoanalytic approach promoted by Sigmund Freud, he continued, “In addition, a homosexual, insane, or neuropathic heredity cannot be incriminated, because the condition appears just as frequently in those who are free from any hereditary taint.”²⁸⁸

Still, scientists agreed on one critical point: sexology had a vitally important role to play in improving society. Indeed, “there can be no improvement so long as crass ignorance of the science of sexology prevails,” Shufeldt predicted. He asserted that science, not law or religion, should have the ultimate authority over human reproduction: “We will continue to breed millions of sexual perverts and inverts—psychopathic types—just so long as any ignorant priest, justice of the peace or other party, is permitted to give people permission to breed them, that is, without the would-be parents having

²⁸⁶ William Lee Howard, “Sexual Perversion,” *The Alienist and Neurologist*, 17:1 (January 1896): 6.

²⁸⁷ R.W. Shufeldt, “The Medico-Legal Consideration of Perverts and Inverts,” *Pacific Medical Journal*, 48 (1905): 391.

²⁸⁸ Isador Coriat, “Homosexuality: Its Psychogenesis and Treatment,” *New York Medical Journal*, (March 22, 1913): 590. On the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis on American sexology, see Henry Abelove, “Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans,” Eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Barale, and David Halperin, *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 381-396.

first been examined by a competent medical expert or experts, and pronounced sound.”²⁸⁹

Similarly, Howard argued that the legal establishment needed to look to the medical to consider adequately the cases of “sexual perversion and inversion” that so frequently came before the courts. Jurists “must be able to distinguish the congenital from the acquired form as a disease, from the vulgar vice of the male and female prostitute.”²⁹⁰

Although Howard insisted here on carefully distinguishing between congenital homosexuality, vice, and prostitution, other scientists saw considerable overlap among these categories.

By describing homosexuality as degeneracy, disease, or hereditary taint, scientists often created a catch-22 for homosexuals, who they also accused of race suicide on account of their propensity for non-procreative sex. Homosexuals and inverters could potentially pass their pathology on to future generations, thereby weakening the race physically and morally. But scientists and social critics alike also worried that the number of “inverters and perverts” among middle-class whites was increasing at the same moment that birth rates in that population were falling. In fact, Brooklyn-based neurologist and psychiatrist John F.W. Meagher explained that the harsh treatment and ostracization of homosexuals derived in part from society’s concern over race suicide. “The antagonism of the social group to homosexuality is not due only to this sort of sex expression alone,” he wrote in 1929, “but because homosexuality turns the person away from his or her biological duty in regard to race preservation.”²⁹¹ Society’s concerns were not unfounded, according to Meagher, who noted that “one authority said that only three per

²⁸⁹ Shufeldt, 391.

²⁹⁰ William Lee Howard, “Sexual Perversion,” *The Alienist and Neurologist*, 17:1 (January 1896): 6.

²⁹¹ John F.W. Meagher, “Homosexuality. Its Psychobiological and Psychopathological Significance,” *The Urologic and Cutaneous Review*, 33:8 (August 1929): 506.

cent of active homosexual men had the natural impulse to preserve the species.” Women were under greater pressure to marry and few had the economic resources to live independent of men and foster the kind of elaborate subcultures found among homosexual men in urban enclaves. But even if they married and had children, Meagher implicated lesbians as well, for “We often see homosexual women who love neither their husbands nor their children, but crave only power or social success, even at the expense of a happy family life.”²⁹²

Scientists connected homosexuality to race suicide in a less direct way as well, by linking both to masturbation. Their case studies of homosexual men and women almost always made note of the patients’ masturbatory habits.²⁹³ Others argued that homosexuality was a form of masturbation, and vice versa—loving oneself and one’s own sex—and later, with the influence of Freud, characterized homosexuality and masturbation as sexual “narcissism.”²⁹⁴ For instance, “With the mother image, autoerotic practices and narcissism shutting off the gate to womanhood, we find our patient well on the road toward homosexuality,” Benjamin Karpman, founder of the Washington, D.C.,

²⁹² Meagher, 512.

²⁹³ See for example, Benjamin Karpman, “The Sexual Offender,” Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Review, 10 (1923): 289-296; James G. Kiernan, “Sexology—Increase in American Inversion. Birth Control Among Primitive Peoples,” Urologic and Cutaneous Review, 20 (1916): 44-49; C.P. Oberndorf, “Homosexuality,” New York State Journal of Medicine, 22:4 (April 1922): 176-180; William Lee Howard, “Sexual Perversion,” The Alienist and Neurologist, 17:1 (January 1896): 1; Talmey, “Notes on Homosexuality,” 3; and William Lee Howard, “Psychical Hermaphroditism: A Few Notes on Sexual Perversion,” The Alienist and Neurologist, 18 (1897): 115. Indeed, as Thomas Laqueur demonstrates in Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation (New York: Zone Books, 2003), masturbation was an obsession in nineteenth-century American and European culture, with scientists linking the practice to a variety of physical and mental disorders as well as moral decay.

²⁹⁴ See Meagher, “Homosexuality. Its Psychobiological and Psychopathological Significance,” 506-507, and Augustin J. Himel, “Some Minor Studies in Psychology, with Special Reference to Masturbation,” New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, 60:6 (December 1907): 439-452.

Psychoanalytic Institute, remarked in 1923.²⁹⁵ Kiernan meanwhile alleged that chronic masturbation could cause homosexuality, particularly among the “neurotic” and “insane.” He wrote, “The female masturbator of this type usually becomes excessively prudish, despises and hates the opposite sex, and frequently forms a furious attachment for another woman, to whom she unselfishly devotes herself. The same phenomenon may be observed in male masturbators.”²⁹⁶ Thus, as Oberndorf pointed out, “as a disease, homosexuality, quite as much as autoeroticism, with which it is so often associated, warrants the attention of physicians dealing with abnormalities of conduct.”²⁹⁷ Amidst declining marriage rates, “There is no reason for leaving this matter [masturbation] in the hands of blind leaders of the blind, and the actual conditions of modern civilization give it a great social significance.”²⁹⁸ For similar reasons, homosexuality was of “great social significance.” In short, homosexuals imperiled the race if they reproduced and if they did not.

While scientists worried about homosexuality’s significance for the march of civilization, they often had more immediate fears as well. In addition to connecting sexual variance with venereal disease, as Lydston did with the “mulatto cook,” scientists linked “perversion” with violence, crime, and vice.²⁹⁹ “That crimes, murders especially, are committed through the insane jealousy of homo-sexuals [sic] and young women who

²⁹⁵ Karpman, “The Sexual Offender,” 289. Karpman also penned a book-length publication of the same name, in addition to nine other books, primarily on criminal psychoanalysis.

²⁹⁶ Kiernan, “Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murders,” 172.

²⁹⁷ Oberndorf, “Homosexuality,” 180.

²⁹⁸ Himel, “Some Minor Studies in Psychology, with Special Reference to Masturbation,” 440.

²⁹⁹ Nayan Shah’s *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) contains a fascinating discussion of medical experts who characterized syphilis as endemic to the Chinese, spread among the immigrant population by female prostitutes and men driven to sodomy in part because of the scarcity of women in America’s Chinatowns, then transmitted to whites through the presence of Chinese “houseboys” as domestic laborers as well as

practice Lesbian love and mutual manustupration [sic] is now well-known,” Howard remarked in 1896.³⁰⁰ Similarly, Kiernan connected sexual perversion to primitive “blood thirst” and “tribal fetishism.”³⁰¹ Unlike Lydston and Howard, however, he believed that although most “perverts” suffered from congenital defects or “imperative conceptions,” they were nonetheless legally responsible and should not be immune to prosecution. “While the victim of congenital sexual inversion cannot be regarded as a lunatic, nor as criminally nor civilly irresponsible, still there exists a peculiar psychical state closely akin to that of the hysteric or sexual neurasthenic,” he remarked in an 1894 article, focusing there on the sexual perils of overcivilization rather than primitivism.³⁰² Still, Kiernan maintained, the criminal justice system critically needed a better scientific understanding of sexual perversion.

Accordingly, across the board American sexologists asserted the broad social relevance of their medical knowledge and many urged that their expertise on sexual matters be brought to bear on the law. Beginning in the 1890s, Howard urged that the “unfortunate class of sexual perverts be dealt with in a more humane manner than at present.”³⁰³ “The law should understand crime arising from psycho-sexual causes,” he reiterated in 1904, and “this knowledge must be given to the law by the medical profession.” Like other scientific paternalists, Howard hoped to protect the sexual pervert from society as much as the reverse. He opined, “A thorough understanding of the recent

through prostitution. On scientists’ connections between homosexuality and venereal disease more generally, see Terry, *An American Obsession*, 94-105.

³⁰⁰ William Lee Howard, “Sexual Perversion,” *The Alienist and Neurologist*, 17:1 (January 1896): 1.

³⁰¹ See in particular, James Kiernan, “Psychological Aspects of the Sexual Appetite,” *The Alienist and Neurologist*, 12 (1891): 188-219.

³⁰² James Kiernan, “Psychical Treatment of Congenital Sexual Inversion,” *Review of Insanity and Nervous Diseases*, 5 (1894/1895): 293.

³⁰³ Howard, “Sexual Perversion,” *Alienist and Neurologist*, 1.

investigations in the anomalies of sex feelings, of sexual perversion, and of the fact that there is something more in sex and sexuality than physical organs, is absolutely necessary if we wish to render justice to our fellow-man.”³⁰⁴ It was a sentiment he shared with a number of other American sexologists who similarly maintained that most sexual perverts, particularly inverts, suffered from a congenital disease or biological defect beyond their control and thus deserved pity rather than condemnation.³⁰⁵ Others concurred with Kiernan that perverts and inverts were criminally responsible regardless of the cause of their “anomaly.” New York City psychiatrist and psychoanalyst C.P. Oberndorf, for instance, saw homosexuality simultaneously as a disease and a “social menace...to the psychic health of the community,” warranting both “legal criminal restrictions” and “the attention of physicians.”³⁰⁶

Indeed, many American sexologists worked at the nexus of medicine and law. Nearly all held medical degrees, many belonged to the Medico-Legal Society based in New York, and several also specialized in neurology or psychiatry, often working as consulting physicians at local mental hospitals or institutions for the criminally insane. Kiernan is a case in point. He worked as a physician and clinical psychiatrist in Chicago and was also a Fellow of the Chicago Academy of Medicine and a professor of forensic psychiatry.³⁰⁷ Like Kiernan, Allan McLane Hamilton, a New York neurologist and

³⁰⁴ William Lee Howard, “Sexual Perversion in America,” American Journal of Dermatology and Genito-Urinary Diseases, 8 (1904): 9.

³⁰⁵ Lydston most definitely fits in this group. See also R.W. Shufeldt, “Judicial Ignorance of Sexual Crimes,” Pacific Medical Journal, 50 (1907): 79-82, and “The Medico Legal Consideration of Perverts and Inverts,” Pacific Medical Journal, 48 (1905): 385-393.

³⁰⁶ C.P. Oberndorf, “Homosexuality,” New York State Journal of Medicine, 22:4 (April 1922): 179-180. In a similar vein, see also, John F.W. Meagher, “Homosexuality. Its Psychobiological and Psychopathological Significance,” The Urologic and Cutaneous Review, 33:8 (August 1929): 518.

³⁰⁷ Chad Heap, with an introduction by George Chauncey, Homosexuality in the City: A Century of Research at the University of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2000), 9-13, and Kiernan, “Psychical Treatment of Congenital Sexual Inversion,” 293.

consulting physician to the Manhattan State Hospital, testified in court about the nature of sexual inversion and its criminal culpability.³⁰⁸ Despite sexologists' medical background, as Irvine suggests, American sexology was truly an interdisciplinary endeavor.

Moreover, since racial and sexual science shared much the same scientists and audience in turn-of-the-century America, it is hardly surprising the overlapping fields also shared a common language and set of concerns. Indeed, for many scientists, questions of sex and "sexual perversion" resonated for the ethnologist as much as for the sexologist. Under the heading "Medical-Legal Contributions," The American Journal of Neurology and Psychiatry included brief discussions of recent scientific work. In the 1882 issue, the section first highlighted Kiernan, then went on to praise German sexologist Krafft-Ebing for his work on "the disgusting, but from an anthropological, ethnological, and medico-legal point of view important topic of sexual perversion." Part of what made Krafft-Ebing's work so noteworthy and of such ethnological interest to the editors was that his assessment of the "morbid character" of sexual perversion "call[ed] attention to the coexisting somatic evidence of degeneration."³⁰⁹ As previously demonstrated, degeneration was a key concept in evolutionary theory's application to racial science. "Sexual perversion," then, was of considerable import to the ethnologist because it threatened the race (implicitly the white race), racial progress, and racial hierarchy. Likewise, in his 1905 article, "Medico-Legal Consideration of Perverts and Inverts," R.W. Shufeldt railed against suppression or censorship of sexological work in

³⁰⁸ Allan McLane Hamilton, "The Civil Responsibility of Sexual Perverts," American Journal of Insanity, 4 (April 1896).

³⁰⁹ "Medico-Legal Contributions," The American Journal of Neurology and Psychiatry, (1882): 323.

the U.S. states as prudish and dangerous to “any one having the interests of his race continuously in hand.”³¹⁰

Sexology was not only legitimate science, Shufeldt argued, it was vitally important to the interests of the white race. “How can we ever hope to improve the tissue of which our race is composed unless we are familiar with every cell now included in its composition?” Shufeldt asked. “This demands the very closest study of every type in existence and particularly the abnormal and objectionable types, and an enormous number of these are to be met with among the psycho-sexual perverts.” He lauded the recently published Autobiography of an Androgyne as a fascinating insider account of the life and mind of a self-professed sexual invert. At a time when anthropology was largely devoted to ethnographic studies of race, he declared, “It is an object lesson to every doctor of medicine and lawyer in this or any other civilized nation. It should be read by every sociologist, anthropologist, and professional person in this country.”³¹¹ In his anti-black missives, The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization (1907) and America’s Greatest Problem: The Negro (1915), he would construct African Americans as a threat to civilization and white supremacy—the two were irrevocably linked in his work and that of many of his scientific contemporaries—but here, he focused on the threat from within. Shufeldt called for better scientific understanding of the problem of perversion not just for the sake of knowledge, but for its application in improving the race. Clearly, American scientists did not view race and sexuality as presenting separate problems, but rather as interlinked threats to the status quo.

³¹⁰ R.W. Shufeldt, “The Medico-Legal Consideration of Perverts and Inverts,” Pacific Medical Journal, 48 (1905): 386.

³¹¹ Shufeldt, 393.

“A Lusus Naturae”: Homosexuality, Inversion, and Sexual Taxonomy

Taxonomy of human difference was one of the most visible scientific traditions that sexology borrowed from ethnology, as was the basic premise that such differences were grounded in the body. Ethnology had long devoted much of its attention to classifying the races and each scientist promoted his own set of racial categories and subcategories. Moreover, these categories had deep social and political resonance that denoted not just difference, but also hierarchy. Similarly, much of sexology was devoted to classifying and defining sexual variances. Sexology texts such as those by Kiernan, Lydston, Howard, and Coriat typically began with carefully qualified definitions of various “perversions.”³¹² Like racial classification, sexual categories were defined differently and often debated among scientists, who were particularly divided on how to classify inversion and homosexuality. Many sexology texts began by differentiating or connecting the two phenomena and numerous articles in American scientific journals were devoted to exploring the relationship between sexual object choice, gender deviance, and bodily sex. Thus, the sexual taxonomy each scientist devised was generally indicative of how he viewed this relationship.

While sexologists sometimes differed on terminology and often insisted they were proposing an entirely new schematic for understanding sexuality, a similar classification scheme ran through these late nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific texts. For one, sexologists usually divided sexual perversion into two categories, those with

³¹² See for example, James Kiernan, “Sexual Perversions, and the Whitechapel Murders,” The Medical Standard 4:5 (November 1888): 129-130 and 4:6 (December 1888): 170-172; Kiernan, “Psychological Aspects of the Sexual Appetite,” The Alienist and Neurologist 12 (1891): 188-219; G. Frank Lydston, The Surgical Diseases of the Genito-Urinary Tract: Venereal and Sexual Diseases, Rev. Ed. (Philadelphia: F.E. Davis and Co., 1905), 512-567; William Lee Howard, “Sexual Perversion,” The Alienist and Neurologist,

abnormal “sexual object choice” (which primarily referred to homosexuality, though some scientists also included bestiality or pedophilia under this heading) and those with abnormal “sexual aim” (which usually referred to a variety of fetishes or sexual crimes).³¹³ Although many American sexology texts included a titillating array of fetish case studies, the first category received scientists’ most sustained attention. After all, in disrupting gender norms, frequently rejecting the socio-political institution of marriage, and impeding reproduction, scientists viewed homosexuality as endangering white civilization. Furthermore, just as ethnologists had debated the origin of the races, sexologists debated the causes of homosexuality and inversion. Sexual perversion, particularly homosexuality, could be either 1) congenital or 2) acquired. Homosexual object choice could either 1) correspond to deviance in bodily sex or gender, or 2) it could be entirely independent of such deviance. And finally, a man or woman could either be 1) the active agent in pursuing a homosexual relationship, or 2) the passive recipient of another’s homosexual advances. The passive/active dichotomy had implications for roles in the sex act itself as well. Scientists characterized homosexuality as a phenomenon that disrupted Victorian gender binaries, but, ironically, they created new binaries to describe homosexuality.

7:1 (January 1896): 1-6; and Isador Coriat, “Homosexuality: Its Psychogenesis and Treatment,” New York Medical Journal, (March 22, 1913): 589-594.

³¹³ For example, under the heading of “sexual perversion,” Lydston included “(a) those having a predilection (affinity) for their own sex; (b) those having a predilection for abnormal methods of gratification with the opposite sex; (c) those affected with bestiality.” G. Frank Lydston, “A Lecture on Sexual Perversion, Satyriasis and Nymphomania,” Philadelphia Medical and Surgical Reporter, (September 7, 1889), reprinted in Lydston, Addresses and Essays (Louisville, KY: Renz and Henry, 1892), 246. Lydston’s schematic here represents somewhat of a break with other scientific models, which often lumped same-sex affinity and bestiality together as the same “perversion.” Over two decades later, Coriat invoked a similar model in the New York Medical Journal, stating: “The sexual aberrations in man, or the deviations from the normal sexual impulse, may be divided into two types, the inversions or deviations in relation to the sexual object choice, such as homosexuality, and the deviations in reference to the sexual

Among historians, homosexuality is now widely viewed as a relatively recent—and Western—invention, one that emerged when heterosexuality and homosexuality became constitutive of exclusive and opposite sexual identities rather than acts.³¹⁴ As Michel Foucault famously stated in *The History of Sexuality*, “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.” Moreover, sexual behaviors that were once thought of as criminal acts were increasingly described instead as diseases or pathologies—i.e. bodily deficiencies rather than simply misdeeds. Consequently, scientists attempted to locate clues about sexuality and character on the corporeal body. Also central to historians’ narrative of the invention of homosexuality is the notion that scientists initially subsumed same-sex object choice under the broader category of gender deviance or “inversion.”³¹⁵

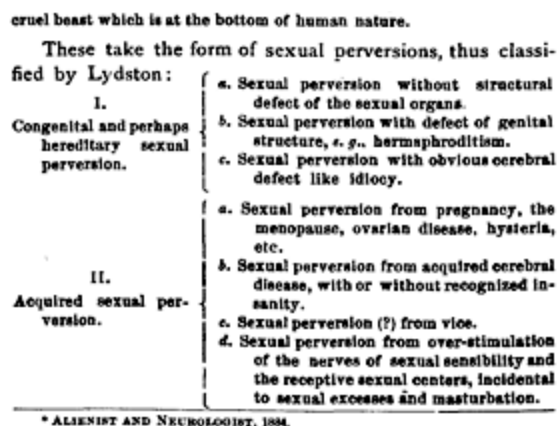
However, for scientists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States, the relationship between gender performance, bodily sex, and sexual affinity was actually far from settled. The classification systems they proposed attempted to sort out this relationship as well as the myriad causes of sexual perversion. For example, Lydston

aim, such as fetichism [sic], sadism, and masochism.” Isador Coriat, “Homosexuality: Its Psychogenesis and Treatment,” *New York Medical Journal*, (March 22, 1913): 589.

³¹⁴ The theory that homosexuality was invented as an exclusive and specific identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—though the behavior patterns predated the terminology that described it as such—has been argued in several influential texts, including Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Jonathon Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995), and George Chauncey’s *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), among others. The construction of homosexual identity(ies) has also been the subject of considerable theoretical work, including foundational texts like Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990, 1976); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999, 1990); and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

³¹⁵ See for example, Siobhan Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), especially 15-21; Rupp, *A Desired Past*, 73-100; George Chauncey Jr., “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality,” 57-69; Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, eds, *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science*, 41-45; and Terry, *An American Obsession*, 43-45.

used the schematic below in at least three publications, and it was reprinted by several other sexologists, including Kiernan and British sexologist Havelock Ellis.³¹⁶



Notably, the primary division in Lydston's schematic was between "congenital" and "acquired sexual perversion," which he and other sexologists saw as an important distinction and one that resonated in the field well into the twentieth century. In his 1889 "Lecture on Sexual Perversion, Satyriasis and Nymphomania," Lydston argued that sexual perversion with "congenital and perhaps hereditary" causes was more palatable.³¹⁷ "Even to the moralist there should be much satisfaction in the thought that a large class of sexual perverts are physically abnormal rather than morally leprous," he remarked. In other words, the congenital pervert should be pitied rather than persecuted and, ideally,

³¹⁶ In discussing this schematic in The Surgical Diseases of the Genito-Urinary Tract: Venereal and Sexual Diseases, Lydston explained, "When the above classification first appeared, it was not cordially received, its practicality being overlooked. Its recent adoption by Havelock Ellis, who asserts its superiority to Krafft-Ebing's classification, is extremely gratifying" (530-531). For his part, Kiernan, from whom the image of Lydston's schematic above is taken, felt the schematic was unnecessarily complex. He stated, "While this classification has many advantages it is subject to the criticism of being too diffuse, and somewhat justly, since Lydston's classes are in many instances psychologically the same or have the same origin, and for these reasons I prefer a classification I published some years ago [in the Detroit Lancet]: 'First: Those which originate in imperative conceptions. Second: Those due to congenital defect. Third: Those which are incident to insanity, periods of involution, or to neurotic states. Finally, those which result from vice. These last arise from the fact that nerves too frequently irritated by a given stimulus require a new stimulus to rouse them.'" James Kiernan, "Psychological Aspects of the Sexual Appetite," The Alienist and Neurologist 12 (1891), 198-199.

³¹⁷ Lydston, The Surgical Diseases of the Genito-Urinary Tract, 246, 244.

treated medically. However, Lydston cautioned: “It is often difficult to draw the line of demarcation between physical and moral perversion. Indeed, the one is so often dependent upon the other that it is doubtful whether it were wise to attempt the distinction in many instances.” Nonetheless, he concluded, “this does not affect the cogency of the argument that the sexual pervert is generally a physical aberration—a *lusus naturae*.”³¹⁸ Sexologists largely followed Lydston’s distinction between acquired and congenital perversion, but some argued that the acquired form was far more common. His colleague Kiernan, for example, maintained that “sodomy” was “often but simple vice,” though he acknowledged “sometimes it results from an imperative conception,” or from “vice...conjoined with congenital defect.”³¹⁹

Lydston’s distinction between acquired and congenital perversion also had implications for his understanding of race. He and other scientists frequently associated “sexual perversion from vice” with the lower classes and, often, the “lower races.” Moreover, sexual “over-stimulation” was considered by many scientists, including Lydston, as an innate feature of all black men; white scientists argued that this general hypersexuality could drive them to rape white women or it could lead them to unnatural relations with other men. Elsewhere, Lydston argued that black men’s supposed sexual excess was a feature of their biology that was beyond their control, but here he associated sexual “over-excitement” with “acquired” rather than “congenital” perversion.

Whether sexual perversions were congenital or acquired was not the only murky territory for Lydston. Individuals with “a predilection for their own sex” presented additional challenges. “The Precise Causes of sexual perversion are obscure,” he wrote,

³¹⁸ Ibid, 244. The translation of “*Lusus Naturae*” is a “sport of nature” or “freak of nature.”

but “just as we may have variations of physical form, and of mental attributes, in general, so we may have variations and perversions of that intangible entity: sexual affinity.”³²⁰ Throughout his publications on the subject, Lydston struggled to unpack the relationship between homosexuality and physical and “psychical” hermaphroditism, or what was often called “sexual inversion.” Indeed, he attributed many “sexual perversions” to atypical genitalia and saw the problem of same-sex affinity as a form of physical or “psychical” hermaphroditism. Still, he could not avoid observing that in many cases, men and women who sought out members of their own sex demonstrated no corresponding deviance of gender or bodily sex.

Some sexologists claimed that only homosexuals of the most pronounced type displayed visible bodily differences, but most sexologists nonetheless spent considerable time examining the bodies of homosexuals and “inverts” with the expectation of physical indicators. However, the fact that such difference was often invisible to the naked eye did not make it non-existent for these scientists. For many sexologists, the deviant behavior or gender expression of homosexuals and/or inverts was evidence that a congenital abnormality must exist. For example, in an 1896 article published in the American Journal of Insanity, Allan McLane Hamilton conceded, “while it is true that some of these subjects of the contrary sexual instinct present a physical departure from the ordinary standard, approaching that of the other sex, there is no arbitrary rule to guide us.” But, he added, “there, nevertheless, exists a dominant mental defect which sometimes is so marked as to absolutely control the individual’s relations with his

³¹⁹ Kiernan, “Sexual Perversions and the Whitechapel Murders,” 130.

³²⁰ Lydston, 246.

fellows.”³²¹ Other scientists followed a similar model; cases of homosexuality or inversion in which no bodily differences were ascertained could still be considered congenital, but indicated an inherited mental defect rather than a physical one. “The genital organs of the pervert are almost without an exception normal in appearance and function,” Howard observed in 1897, and “the condition of these individuals is a decided psychical morbid entity.” Still, he insisted, “I do not believe that true inversion is ever an acquired condition; it is congenital.”³²²

Over time, with the growing influence of Freud and psychoanalysis, an increasing number of American scientists viewed homosexuality and inversion as a mental disorder rather than a strictly physical one. Far from a universal trend, however, it also reflected a disciplinary divide, with physicians and biologists continuing to search for bodily clues and psychiatric professionals looking instead (or in addition) to the mind. Writing in The Urologic and Cutaneous Review in 1929, John Meagher approached the subject of homosexuality “from the standpoint of the psychiatrist.” He remarked, “The urologist and gynecologist would most likely stress the physical rather than the psychic factors. But nearly all of these patients owe their status to psychic rather than to physical mal-development.”³²³ Even then, however, many scientists continued to link homosexuality with physical abnormalities, particularly in regards to primary or secondary sex characteristics. Writing in the same issue of the Review, Oberndorf commented, “Medical literature and anatomical museums abound in curious examples where this bi-

³²¹ Allan McLane Hamilton, “Civil Responsibility of Sexual Perverts,” American Journal of Insanity, 4 (April 1896): 504-505.

³²² William Lee Howard, “Psychical Hermaphroditism: A Few Notes on Sexual Perversion,” The Alienist and Neurologist, 18 (1897): 114.

³²³ John F.W. Meagher, “Homosexuality: Its Psychobiological and Psychopathological Significance,” The Urologic and Cutaneous Review, 33:8 (August 1929): 505.

sexual predisposition of either sex manifests itself in the various forms of glaring, physical pelvic anomalies contrasting with the predominant physical characteristics of the opposite sex.” He in contrast would be discussing “only those forms of homosexuality which appear in persons who deviate physically in no appreciable way or only very slightly from the average person.”³²⁴

Indeed, the belief that character and morality were inscribed upon the body was so central to nineteenth and early twentieth century American cultural and scientific discourse that any feature of a body presupposed to be deviant could be read as evidence of its abnormality. In his 1896 article, Hamilton noted, “Of the sexual female examples that have come under my notice the offender was usually of a masculine type, or if she presented none of the ‘characteristics’ of the male, was a subject of pelvic disorders, with scanty menstruation, and was more or less hysterical or insane.” This teleological approach to the body marked both racial and sexual science and blended physical and psychological features in constructions of difference. Likewise, Hamilton’s discussion of female inverts focused on deviation from gender norms, as well as masculine appearance, menstrual disorders, and insanity: “The views of such a person were erratic, ‘advanced,’ and extreme, and she nearly always lacked the ordinary modesty and retirement of her sex.”³²⁵

Like racial taxonomy, then, the physical body clearly played an important—though complicated and often contested—role in classifying sexual variance. The

³²⁴ C.P. Oberndorf, “Diverse Forms of Homosexuality,” *The Urologic and Cutaneous Review*, 33:8 (August 1929): 519.

³²⁵ Hamilton, “Civil Responsibility of Sexual Perverts,” 505. On the impact of Freud and psychoanalysis on scientific concepts of homosexuality in America, see Henry Abelow, “Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans,” in eds. Henry Abelow, Michele Barale, and David Halperin, *The Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 381-393.

distinction between congenital or acquired forms of sexual perversion, or between homosexuality, inversion, and “true hermaphroditism,” often hinged on physical features. As they had long done to distinguish the races, scientists examining homosexuals and inverters remarked on the shape, size, or symmetry of their crania, for example.³²⁶ In this regard, the bodies of the “lower races,” inverters, and homosexuals were described in remarkably similar ways.

The similar ways in which scientists described the “lower races” and “perverts” also focused on perceived sexual difference. Scientists often described black women as having masculine features, enlarged clitorises, and a pathologically voracious sexual drive. This characterization was echoed in many scientific considerations of lesbians, regardless of race. A summary of current medical literature in the Journal of the American Medical Association, for example, pointed to a link between “hypergenitalism” and “unnatural sexual acts,” which was “not without importance with regard to the responsibility of these perverts.”³²⁷ Describing a female patient who left her husband, renamed herself “Joe,” and took up residence in the woods with a woman she called her wife, Kiernan wrote, “She had an enlarged clitoris, covered with a large relaxed prepuce. She had periodical attacks of sexual furor.”³²⁸ Scientists at the turn of the century typically characterized black men and women alike as suffering from “sexual furor,” though the former’s sexuality was cast as especially dangerous. Indeed, on the same page that Kiernan discussed the white lesbian, “Joe,” he also turned his attention to the “blood

³²⁶ See, for example, James Kiernan, “Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murders,” Medical Standard, 4:5 (November 1888): 171; Kiernan, “Psychological Aspects of the Sexual Appetite,” 202; and Ben Karpman, “The Sexual Offender,” 296.

³²⁷ “Perversions and Hypergenitalism,” Journal of the American Medical Association, 80:2 (1923): 1346.

³²⁸ Kiernan, “Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murders,” 171.

thirst” and sexual furor that drove the “criminal assaults made by negroes in the South” upon white women.³²⁹

Scientists thus used similar language and logic in characterizing homosexuals and non-whites. They described homosexual women of all races and African Americans of both sexes as overly masculine and dangerously hypersexual.³³⁰ At the same time, there were also parallels in scientists’ assessments of the bodies of nonwhite men and male inverts and homosexuals of all races, which they similarly painted as not masculine enough. Ethnologists had long distinguished black, Asian, and Native American men from their white counterparts by their “scanty beards;” this secondary sex trait simultaneously marked their racial difference and their status as somehow less than male. Likewise, “scanty beard” was often used to mark the sexual difference of homosexual and “inverted” men as well as the biological nature of their deviance.³³¹ “Indeed, the homosexual was viewed as having many of the same characteristics that distinguished ‘primitive’ races from their ‘advanced’ European heterosexual counterparts, namely degeneracy, atavism, regression, and hypersexuality,” Jennifer Terry writes. “In this respect, race functioned as both an analogous and synonymous rubric for conceptualizing sexuality in its deviant homosexual form.”³³²

³²⁹ Kiernan, “Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murders,” 171. Scientists’ link between black men and “sexual furor” (also frequently termed “furor sexualis”) is discussed at length in the next chapter.

³³⁰ On the similarities between representations of black men and lesbians in popular and scientific discourse, see in particular, Lisa Duggan, Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

³³¹ The 1922 text, The Female-Impersonators, written by self-professed invert Ralph Werther and sold to a medical and legal audience only, offers a particular revealing example. Drawing on common scientific ideas about homosexuality and inversion, he continually presented himself as a biological anomaly who should not be persecuted—or prosecuted—for his deviance. Included in the text’s index were the terms “Beard growth of author,” “Beardless men (natural),” and “Beard scanty;” there were ten citations for these three terms combined. The Female-Impersonators and Werther’s other work is discussed at the end of this chapter.

³³² Terry, 36.

Scientists also categorized racial and sexual “intermediate types” in strikingly similar ways. Lydston’s “spurious” mulatto cook demonstrated the threat of passing embodied in racial and sexual intermediacy. The fertility of both biracial people and physical and psychical “inverts” drew scientific attention as well. Scientists had argued since the early nineteenth century that biracial people were incapable of producing offspring, often as a means of proving the black and white races were separate species. Similarly, Lydston argued that “The so-called hermaphrodite is sterile—fortunately for society—and, so far as procreation is concerned, cannot functionate [sic] as either male or female.” And prolific American sexologist Douglas McMurtrie recounted numerous inverted women he encountered who, pressured to marry, suffered miscarriages or stillbirths when capable of conceiving at all. In fact, he argued, “In only one case do I know of a living and healthy child and in this instance the mother is not inverted to an extreme degree.” For McMurtrie, the apparent infertility of “inverted women” demonstrated physical abnormality, not their likely resistance to marital relations.³³³

Sexual and racial taxonomies overlapped in other ways as well, with certain “perversions” occasionally attributed to a specific racial or ethnic group. In one article, Kiernan remarked that sexual perversions may frequently “reappear in certain races under the influence of tribal customs.”³³⁴ Meanwhile, in a lengthy paper presented before the Chicago Academy of Medicine, where he was a fellow, Kiernan recounted over thirty case studies drawn from his own practice and the published reports of other sexologists. These case studies described a range of sexual “abnormities” or affinities outside the

³³³ Lydston, *The Surgical Diseases of the Genito-Urinary Tract*, 516. Douglas McMurtrie, “Principles of Homosexuality and Sexual Inversion in the Female,” *American Journal of Urology*, 9 (1913): 150.

³³⁴ Kiernan, “Sexual Perversion and the Whitechapel Murders,” 172.

prescriptive norm of married, heterosexual and procreative sex, beginning with hermaphroditism and sexual inversion and building to increasingly exotic fetishes.³³⁵ Of these thirty studies, two were cases of physical intersexuality; race was specifically noted in both cases and neither was white. One was “a twenty-eight year old San Salvador domestic [who] was arrested for prostitution” and the other was Lydston’s mulatto cook. The San Salvador domestic had apparently alternated between male and female identities, and “sexual gratification was equally distributed between the two sets of organs.” The domestic, whom Connecticut physician C.W. Fitch (Kiernan excerpts Fitch’s study in his paper) referred to as “it,” was living as a man when authorities discovered her pregnancy and forced her to don female attire. The case studies of the domestic and the cook shared several common elements: their engagement in sexual activity with men and women alike, their representation as deceitful and predatory, their links to crime, and their status as racial “others.” In contrast, Kiernan’s case studies of “psychical” inverters, whose race or ethnicity was not noted, painted these individuals as pitiable, insane rather than deliberately deceitful, and self-destructive rather than predatory.³³⁶

³³⁵ James Kiernan, “Psychological Aspects of the Sexual Appetite,” The Alienist and Neurologist, 12 (1891). One fetish or act in particular appears several times in Kiernan’s paper, and quite often in medical and psychiatric journals and texts during the same period: men who inserted various objects, often described as “wood splinters,” into their urethra for sexual gratification. The potentially dangerous effects were likely one reason why so many scientists took note of it, and indeed, many of the reporting physicians encountered the problem in their clinical practices when patients came in with accompanying injuries. However, I suspect that part of the reason these case studies were so often included amidst discussions of inversion was because of their penetrative element, of male bodies (self) penetrated rather than penetrating, which disrupted Victorian gender expectations. It is perhaps not such a leap since several physicians characterized masturbation in general as a kind of homosexual act.

³³⁶ They were most likely white and Protestant, generally the norm in scientific work of this period, assumed unless otherwise noted. Antisemitism and anti-Catholic sentiment ran high in the U.S. during this period, as did nativism (these phenomena were related of course, since much of the immigration was at that point coming from Southern and Eastern Europe); Lydston even penned a book entitled That Boogey Man, the Jew (Kansas City: Burton Publishing Co., 1921). Cases that described individuals from these groups, then, tended to be highlighted as such. For example, Kiernan included a case study of a necrophiliac priest, the man’s occupation adding to the shock value and playing to Protestant Americans’ fears about

While the role of racial difference was implicit in Kiernan's analysis of the two domestic laborers, it was explicit in the reprint of Kiernan's talk in the Alienist and Neurologist. There, his paper also included a summary of the discussion that occurred afterwards in which respondents considered possible links between sexual perversion and racial "primitivism." Lydston was in attendance at Kiernan's talk and found his own work on sex and race frequently referenced in Kiernan's paper. In addition to the case study of the mulatto cook, Kiernan also featured Lydston's widely reproduced schematic that attempted to categorize the various causes of "sexual perversions." Also in attendance at the discussion, a Dr. Clevenger pointed out that atypical "sexual appetite" was linked to "primitive desire" and reversion to lower evolutionary stages, while Kiernan expressed his disagreement with another scientist's characterization of "sexual perversion" as always a "moral insanity," by countering that it was essential to take into account "racial and religious customs and the influence of vice."³³⁷

"Of Social Value": The Race and Class of Homosexuality

Ironically, while many American scientists worried that homosexuality and inversion threatened civilization, some suggested that these sexual problems were also caused by civilization. Kiernan, for example, wondered if "over-civilization" could be at fault for the "rise in American inversion," while Howard posited that "sexual perversion both in its congenital and acquired form seems to be correlated with the cycles of civilization." The problem was not limited to the lower classes, where the uninformed scientist might expect to find it. Quite the opposite was the case, Howard argued: "The

Catholicism. While he generally did not explicitly make connections between their "perversion" and their race/ethnicity in his case studies, it is likely the connection would have been implicit for the reader.

³³⁷ Kiernan, 218-219.

last decade has demonstrated that sexual perversion is much more frequent in America than the general practitioner realizes, and that its victims do not belong to the vicious classes but to those of good birth—socially and mentally—and to those who have had educational advantages; many belonging to the professions.” The scientist had to be careful to distinguish between the causes, however. “We must consider the sexual pervert as divided into classes—the congenital and acquired,” he remarked, adding, “while the dividing line is not an incised one, still the distinction is not one difficult to comprehend.”³³⁸

For Howard, the line between acquired and congenital perversion was often one of class and, implicitly, of race. “Space prevents me for showing where the rigorous line should be drawn between these banal and vicious classes and the unfortunate psychical pervert,” he noted. The congenital pervert was Howard’s concern and that category did not refer “to the vicious, to the morally depraved, to the male prostitute, to that class which comes under police notice, or to the degenerate whose actions are decidedly anti-social.” While acquired perversion was a vice of circumstance among people who cared little for morality and respectability, for Howard the congenital “class” was found among the most respectable circles of civilized society. The congenital “invert and pervert” could especially be found “among the aesthetic class...among the painters, musicians, poets, and the writers of erotic fulmination.” Indeed, Howard argued, “Ninety percent of these abnormal individuals are engaged in artistic pursuits.”³³⁹ These “unfortunates”

³³⁸ James Kiernan, “An Increase of American Inversion,” *Urologic and Cutaneous Review*, 20 (1916): 44-49; William Lee Howard, “Sexual Perversion in America,” *American Journal of Dermatology and Genito-Urinary Diseases*, 8 (1904): 9.

³³⁹ William Lee Howard, “Psychical Hermaphroditism. A Few Notes on Sexual Perversion,” *The Alienist and Neurologist*, 18:2 (April 1897): 113-114.

should be pitied for their sexual abnormality, yet seemingly held some redeeming social value through their artistic contributions.

In Howard's account, it was the trappings of advanced civilization and modern life—not primitiveness—that could be most closely tied to homosexuality and inversion. Some scientists exposed drag balls in urban black neighborhoods, which they usually associated with the “acquired class” of sexual perversion, the concern of vice squads and police rather than physicians and threatening mainly when their influence crossed the color line. However, like Howard, most scientists were far more concerned with the sexual proclivities of middle and upper class whites and the import of sexual deviance for the future of the race. Indeed, American scientists often argued that modern civilization made men effeminate and the advancement of women's rights led women out of the home and into each other's arms. But whether they turned a critical eye toward America's underclass or, like Howard, maintained that homosexuality and inversion were most readily found amongst the upper echelons of white society, race and class profoundly shaped scientific explanations for homosexuality's cause as well as recommendations for its control. White homosexuals, who comprised the vast majority of case studies described by American sexologists, were often described as suffering from a congenital disease or abnormality, likely a product of civilization or over-civilization. When scientists described homosexuality and inversion among “primitives” or non-whites, they represented the phenomena as an unsurprising indicator of the generally degraded morality and sexually indistinct character of that race—as vice rather than disease.

Given scientists' generally bleak assessment of black sexuality, it is perhaps not surprising that some of the most sensationalistic accounts of homosexuality in American sexology revolved around its incidence in African American communities. Most famously, in an 1893 article often quoted by queer historians, St. Louis physician Charles Hughes reported, "I am credibly informed that there is, in the city of Washington, D.C., an annual convocation of negro men called the drag dance, which is an orgie [sic] of lascivious debauchery beyond pen power of description." Police in New York City recently raided a "similar organization," he added. The group drew its members from across the social strata of the black community, Hughes carefully noted, thus linking this "lascivious debauchery" to racial rather than class status. His description of the scene blends disruption of sex and gender with markers of primitive ritual and savageness:

In this sable performance of sexual perversion all of these men are lasciviously dressed in womanly attire, short sleeves, low-necked dresses and the usual ball-room decorations and ornaments of women, feathered and ribboned head-dresses, garters, frills, ruffles, etc., and deport themselves as women. Standing or seated on a pedestal, but accessible to all the rest, is the naked queen (a male), whose phallic member, decorated with a ribbon, is subject to the gaze and osculations in turn, of all the members of this lecherous gang of sexual perverts and phallic fornicators.³⁴⁰

Understandably, queer historians, particularly those interested in race, have made much of this brief article—all of three paragraphs in length.³⁴¹ But Hughes' text may be even more notable for its exceptionality. Texts like this represent an extremely small

³⁴⁰ Charles Hughes, "Postscript to Paper on 'Erotopathia'—An Organization of Colored Erotopaths," *The Alienist and Neurologist*, 14:4 (October 1893): 731-732.

³⁴¹ See for example Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 75; Terry, 95-96; Duggan, 164-171; Vern Bullough, *Science in the Bedroom: A History of Sex Research* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 93; Rupp, 241; and Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Avon Books, 1976), 66-67, where Hughes' brief piece is reprinted in its entirety. Curiously, in Jennifer Terry's discussion of Hughes' text, in which she focuses on many of the same aspects as I have done here, she claims that "these spectacles were carried on by 'colored erotopaths,' who gathered

proportion of sexology compared to work that focused implicitly or explicitly on homosexuality among middle and upper class whites. Moreover, those texts generally drew on case studies from the sexologists' own practice or that of their peers, discussing pathology or disease among specific individuals, in contrast to Hughes' description of an anonymous black "gang of sexual perverts." And tellingly, Hughes' text is not even an article per se, but rather, a "Postscript to Paper on 'Erotopathia,'" a piece included in the same issue that examined perversion among whites. The phenomenon among African Americans, while clearly fascinating to Hughes, remained a "postscript" to his larger analysis of homosexuality and inversion.

Scientists paid far more attention to homosexuality and inversion among whites of the "respectable classes" for two primary reasons.³⁴² One, for these white scientists, this was the group on which the future of American civilization depended. And to be sure, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century U.S., sexology was almost entirely a white, male profession.³⁴³ Second, in addition to their own racial affiliations and politics, numerous scientists concurred with Howard that homosexuality and inversion actually

annually, providing entertainment for each other and for similarly perverse whites," even though the piece itself makes no mention of white men as participants or observers.

³⁴² Another possible reason for sexologists' overwhelming focus on whites is that American sexology texts often centered around patient case studies; whites of some financial means were most likely to seek and be able to afford to visit these physicians and psychiatrists in their private practice. Many of these sexologists also saw patients in an institutional context, at state hospitals for the mentally ill, but tended to describe these patients as more generally and pervasively insane, in which homosexual behavior could simply be one of many manifestations rather than their dominant diagnosis.

³⁴³ Psychologist Margaret Otis, who published an article on lesbian relationships in boarding schools in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* in 1913, is a notable exception to the male dominion over American sexology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And social worker and penal reformer Katherine Bement Davis' groundbreaking study, *The Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-two Hundred Women* (1929), funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, in many regards paved the way for the work of Alfred Kinsey in the 1940s and 50s and well as other female sexologists like Shere Hite later in the century. Both Otis and Davis were, however, white.

occurred more frequently among the “cultured classes.”³⁴⁴ Meagher echoed Howard’s class-based characterization of homosexuality two decades later, remarking, “Many homosexuals are intellectual and cultured, though sexually infantile.” The scientific methodology behind his conclusions is entirely unclear, but, he continued, “Indulgent male inverts like pleasant, artistic things, and nearly all of them are fond of music. They also like praise and admiration. They are poor whistlers. Their favorite color is green (red, complementary) whereas most individuals prefer blue or red.”³⁴⁵ One can only speculate what Meagher’s favorite color was. Ultimately, though, like many of his bourgeois peers, Meagher worried less about the middle class than the extremes of American’s class strata. He described the country’s wealthy elite—the “cultured classes”—as overly indulgent and hedonistic and seemed to imply the lower classes were simply too ignorant and degraded to think about sexual propriety. “Riches and poverty are more apt to favor homosexuality,” he wrote, while “the development of the average individual is more apt to follow the normal course.”³⁴⁶

Others suggested that general sexual dysfunction was an unfortunate product of civilized cultural mores. Shufeldt, for example, argued that “distressing prudery” had led to a broad range of sexual problems among “too large a proportion of the descendants of the original stock of the United States—that is, that proportion of the present population derived from Anglo-Saxon ancestry.” Such dysfunction was not limited to homosexuality

³⁴⁴ At least one scientist—Irving Rosse of Washington, D.C.—speculated that homosexuality and inversion could be found in somewhat greater numbers among black men, or that they were at least more inclined to act out their proclivities (see Katz, 62). But this too seemed to be a minority opinion compared to the number of scientists who remarked on the high incidence of homosexuality among the intellectual and cultured population of white society.

³⁴⁵ John F.W. Meagher, “Homosexuality. Its Psychobiological and Psychopathological Significance,” *Urologic and Cutaneous Review*, 33:8 (August 1929): 508. Perhaps even stranger is that his negative assessment of homosexual men’s whistling abilities was echoed in other sexology texts.

and as an example, Shufeldt highlighted men who instead made unwanted sexual overtures to women in public. But there, too, “Those guilty of such behavior are frequently men of high social position, and represent such professions as artist, singers, actors or even the clergy, rather than...the humbler walks of life, or still less the ignorant class.” Shufeldt seemed to have sympathy for such men who were dragged into court and public notoriety whenever the “annoyed lady” complained, which stands in sharp contrast to his discussions elsewhere of sexually aggressive, “savage” black men and “outraged” white women.

Another frequent theme in American sexology was that while individuals with homosexual instincts were plentiful among refined whites, they sought outlets for their abnormal desires among the underclass, where opportunities for sexual debauchery of varying stripes were readily available. In his 1922 article, “Homosexuality,” Oberndorf described one patient, a seventy-four year old Civil War veteran, as a “refined gentleman interested in art and literature” and much respected by his peers. For sexual partners, though, the man in question had long “preferred rough, coarse men, like longshoreman, husky and full of vitality,” and found many willing participants among that group. In the same article, Oberndorf described a second patient, a physician, whose many sexual trysts were with “casual strangers of low social caste.” The physician had a large circle of friends who shared his homosexual proclivities as well as his class status, but no sexual activity occurred within this group, Oberndorf noted. Instead, they seemingly all acted out their sexual inclinations among the working class. In this account, the longshoremen

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 517.

and men of low social caste were not characterized as homosexual, so much as sexually indiscriminate, in contrast to the gentleman and doctors who sought sex among them.

Of course, homosexual men and women could not only cross class lines, they sometimes crossed racial boundaries as well, which did not escape scientists' attention. Irving Rosse, a Washington, D.C. physician whom historian Jonathan Katz suggests was Charles Hughes' informant on the city's "colored erotopaths," was particularly disturbed by a series of arrests "under the very shadow of the White House." There, black and white "moral hermaphrodites" were found "in flagrante delicto."³⁴⁷ He concluded that what happened in D.C. was likely representative of other cities. Indeed, Rosse's friend Charles Hughes noted a similar phenomenon in St. Louis in his article, "Homo Sexual Complexion Perverts in St. Louis-- Note on a Feature of Sexual Psychopathy," published in the Alienist and Neurologist in 1907. He reported, "Male negroes masquerading in women's garb and carousing and dancing with white men is the latest St. Louis record of neurotic and psychopathic sexual perversion." The black men were "gowned as women at the miscegenation dance and the negroes called each other feminine names," reinforcing scientists' frequent characterization of the black race as both sexually debased and indistinct in sex and gender.³⁴⁸ Along with a 1913 article in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology by psychologist Margaret Otis that described interracial sexual relationships among female boarding school students, Rosse and Hughes' texts have received considerable attention from queer scholars. But like Hughes' brief earlier discussion of "colored erotopaths," these writings comprise a very small proportion of American

³⁴⁷ Irving C. Rosse, "Homosexuality in Washington, D.C." (1892), excerpted in Katz, 65.

³⁴⁸ Charles Hughes, "Homo Sexual Complexion Perverts in St. Louis," (1907), excerpted in Katz, 75-76.

scientific work on homosexuality.³⁴⁹ Kevin Mumford's Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century persuasively demonstrates that homosexual activity across the color line received considerable attention from vice commissions during this period, but scientists were far more concerned with white homosexuals specifically or interracial sex with procreative potential.³⁵⁰ Moreover, as Hughes himself ultimately concluded, "Homosexuality may be found among blacks, though this phase has not been so recorded, as between white males or white females," a sentiment common among scientists.³⁵¹

While scientists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries frequently argued that nature made men and women less sexually differentiated at the low end of the evolutionary scale, some worried that bourgeois culture might also result in the breakdown of gender roles. Writing in 1929, Meagher seemed to hold particular disdain for the woman "who yearns only for higher education and neglects love."³⁵² Indeed, "so-called emancipated women are usually frigid, and usually have little unselfish maternal feelings."³⁵³ American civilization had gone too far in Meagher's account, allowing women to pursue masculine paths and making men effete. In both men and women, "indulgence" in homosexuality could lead to a host of other physical and psychological problems, particularly impotence and frigidity respectively.³⁵⁴ "Needless to say, there are far too many frigid women and impotent men in our cultured classes," he remarked, raising implicit concerns about the future of the race. Race progress depended on the

³⁴⁹ See Margaret Otis, "A Perversion Not Commonly Noted" (1913), reprinted in Katz, 101-105. See also Somerville, 34-37, which contains an extended and insightful analysis of the Otis piece.

³⁵⁰ See Mumford, especially 53-92.

³⁵¹ Katz, 76.

³⁵² Meagher, "Homosexuality," 508.

³⁵³ Ibid, 516

strict policing of gender and sex. “The best biological and social asset to society are the complete she-women, and the complete he-men and not their substituted opposites,”

Meagher declared.³⁵⁵

Implicit in some scientists’ association of (primarily male) homosexuality and inversion with the arts and intelligencia lurked the possibility of homosexuals’ social value. William Robinson, doctor, eugenicist, and editor of The American Journal of Urology and Sexology, commented to fellow physician E.S. Shepherd that “perverts” should be given cyanide. Shepherd responded that “such wholesale elimination” might very well remove “a number of valuable citizens.” Robinson in turn suggested he “sketch for the Journal a few intermediates who were of social value,” a call Shepherd heeded in “Contribution to the Study of Intermediacy,” published in 1918. First of all, Shepherd noted, “intermediacy and perversity [are not] synonymous,” despite their correlation in popular and scientific thought. Partly to blame, “physicians, for the most part, see only the lower class of intermediates—those neurotics who are both perverse and mentally inferior or the spiritually feeble-minded,” from whom they generalize about all inverts. “That our streets and beaches are overrun by male prostitutes (fairies) is obvious, just as in such places the female prostitute, professional or clandestine, abounds,” he continued, “but there is no more warrant for judging the intermediates by their lowest manifestations than for judging our womanhood by the lowest class of prostitutes.”³⁵⁶ And thus Shepherd set the stage for a distinction—between inverts who were socially valuable and those who were socially threatening—that rested explicitly on class status and implicitly

³⁵⁴ Ibid, 513.

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 516.

³⁵⁶ E.S. Shepherd, “Contribution to the Study of Intermediacy,” The American Journal of Urology and Sexology, 14: 6 (June 1918): 241-242.

on race as well. Certainly, he wrote, “Intermediates are not only very common but also frequently men and women of great social value. Many of our national leaders have been not only intermediates but even sexually perverse, yet gave valuable service to their fellow men.”³⁵⁷ He even suggested that sexual intermediates were particularly inclined toward humanitarian and reform work, because of their psychical “combination of feminine sympathy with the masculine initiative.”³⁵⁸ But, he added, only reformers “of the better sort” fit this definition. Indeed, for Shepherd, the social value of homosexuals and inverts was directly tied to their social status. It was precisely this association upon which one self-declared intermediate would base his own claims when he reached out to the scientific establishment for sympathy and support.

“To Promote Medical Knowledge”: An Androgyne Speaks Back

Between 1918 and 1922, Alfred W. Herzog, a New York physician and the editor of The Medico-Legal Journal, published three books by self-professed “androgyne” Ralph Werther, who also went by the additional pseudonyms of Earl Lind and Jennie June.³⁵⁹ Under Herzog’s editorship, the journal had published a number of articles on homosexuality.³⁶⁰ He also penned lengthy introductions for each of Werther’s books—Autobiography of an Androgyne, The Female-Impersonators, and Riddle of the Underworld—in which he explained that he was “persuaded that androgynism was not

³⁵⁷ Ibid, 243.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 246.

³⁵⁹ Werther—also a pseudonym—used the name “Jennie June” as his female persona in the “sexual underworld” of New York. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to Werther/Lind/June as “Werther” throughout because he wrote two of his three books under that name and often refers to himself as such therein. His real name is unknown.

³⁶⁰ See for example Bernard Talmey, “Notes on Homosexuality” in the November/December 1917 issue, discussed previously.

sufficiently understood and that therefore androgynes were unjustly made to suffer.”³⁶¹

Indeed, Werther recalled that he completed Autobiography of an Androgyne in 1899, but was unable to procure a publisher for his sympathetic insider account of New York’s sexual underground—that is until he encountered Herzog and convinced him of the book’s scientific import and “missionary” value.³⁶² The book, finally published in 1918, was “not intended as a defense of all those who indulge in homosexual practices,” Herzog clarified; it was “published in an endeavor to obtain justice and humane treatment for the Androgynes, that class of homosexuals in whom homosexuality is not an acquired vice but in whom it is congenital.”³⁶³

Toward that end, Werther consistently emphasized the biological roots of his “inversion.” His publications interspersed textual descriptions of his anatomical difference from “normal” men with nude photographs of himself that underscored his fleshy, feminine form juxtaposed with classical sculptures of muscular masculinity (Figures 1 and 2).³⁶⁴ But his self-representation as “sexually abnormal by birth”—and thus worthy of sympathy from scientists and society as a whole—relied on another important juxtaposition as well.³⁶⁵ Largely embracing scientific understandings of sexuality and race, in all three books Werther was careful to distinguish himself from those for whom homosexuality was an acquired vice. He emphasized his education and

³⁶¹ Alfred Herzog, introduction to The Female-Impersonators by Ralph Werther (New York: Arno Press, 1975, 1922), vii.

³⁶² Alfred Herzog, introduction to Autobiography of an Androgyne by Ralph Werther (New York: Arno Press, 1975, 1918), i.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, ii.

³⁶⁴ Notably, several of the photographs in his books were taken by R.W. Shufeldt, another scientist to whom Werther reached out and one who, like Lydston, inhabited the nexus of racial and sexual science.

³⁶⁵ Earl Lind, Autobiography of an Androgyne (New York: Arno Press, 1975, 1918), 3. Lind wrote under both “Earl Lind” and “Ralph Werther,” always with the other male pseudonym in parentheses on the title page, along with the name of his female alter-ego, “Jennie June.”

good birth to a respectable white family, which he contrasted with the lower-class—and, more implicitly, racially suspect—“toughs” and “degenerates” he encountered in the city’s bars and meeting places. He also sought to refute “the chief charge against androgynes” that “they are guilty of ‘the awful crime of race suicide.’” It was “the fault of nature alone” that “androgynes” did not perpetuate the race, he insisted.³⁶⁶

One of eleven children, Werther was born in 1874 and raised in “the most refined section” of a small town in Connecticut, where his parents “were eminently respectable people.”³⁶⁷ Likewise, the childhood photograph he included was a formal portrait that visually underscored his bourgeois status (Figure 3). According to Werther, he exhibited feminine characteristics from a very young age, for which he was often teased, but he also recounted a large number of sexual experiences with other willing children. “My addiction [to fellatio] was common knowledge among the boys, and others sought it,” he wrote in his autobiography, adding that he “told these boy playmates to call me Jennie.”³⁶⁸ He emphasized the time he spent playing with girls, who accepted him as one of their own, and described himself at length in terms that nineteenth-century Americans would have associated with women—emotional, weak, mercurial. He further recalled that as an early teen, he frequently fantasized about castrating himself “in order to bring [his] physical form more in accordance” with his mind.³⁶⁹ Deeply religious and an excellent student, Werther left Connecticut when he was sixteen to attend a university in New York City. There, the intense crushes on male classmates he had experienced since

³⁶⁶ Ralph Werther, *The Female-Impersonators* (New York: Arno Press, 1975, 1922), 49.

³⁶⁷ Lind, *Autobiography*, 27-28.

³⁶⁸ Lind, *Autobiography*, 31.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

childhood continued, and he reached out to various physicians for a cure. There began his long and complicated relationship with the medical establishment.³⁷⁰

From the beginning, Werther attempted to shape the terms of his medical care. Between the ages of sixteen and nineteen, he submitted to a variety of treatments, including electroshock therapy, among others, to no avail.³⁷¹ He wrote, “After several months treatment, I was rendered almost a physical and nervous wreck by the powerful drugs administered, but my amorous desires showed no change. I now repeatedly appealed for castration.” His physicians refused, insisting that Werther might later regret the decision. Their refusal to perform the procedure is particularly interesting in light of the fact that contemporary scientists were recommending—and carrying out—sterilization for a variety of people who were not of the same “good stock” to which Werther laid claim.³⁷² One wonders whether the idea of castrating an intelligent white man, regardless of his sexual “abnormality,” was simply anathema to the doctors at a time when scientists and politicians alike were increasingly concerned with falling birth rates among middle-class whites. Werther was persistent, however, and set out to conduct his own research on his condition as well as possible solutions. “I had recently read in a medical journal of a man similarly but not identically afflicted who was placed in possession of the normal procreative instinct through castration,” he explained. “During these months, I made diligent search at the library of the New York Academy of

³⁷⁰ Henry Minton, Departing from Deviance: A History of Homosexual Rights and Emancipatory Science in America (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), 23-24.

³⁷¹ Minton, 24.

³⁷² As the next chapter will take up, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the eugenic sterilization of the mentally ill, physically handicapped, poor, and racial minorities, for example, while prominent scientists like Lydston recommended castration for black men as a solution to America’s “lynching problem.”

Medicine for light on my abnormality, and discovered a number of articles in American and foreign journals bearing on it.”³⁷³

Werther also found a sympathetic psychiatrist who encouraged him to accept what “Nature” made him rather than attempt to change his biological fate. Whereas he initially sought the help of science to emancipate him from his “abnormality,” this psychiatrist offered emancipation of a different sort, from the guilt and shame Werther experienced about his sexual desires. As he recounted in his third book, The Riddle of the Underworld, edited by Herzog and serialized in the journal Medical Life in 1921:

The alienist, Dr. Robert S. Newton, was the third physician whom I consulted, but the first who had any inkling of the true nature of my malady. His frankness put an end to my chronic melancholia. I thenceforth merely suffered from it at rare intervals. I ceased the worse than usual longing and praying for a different nature than it had seemed good to the All-Wise to predestinate. The alienist opened my eyes. He taught me that the androgyne’s proclivities are not the depth of depravity that every one previously had given me to understand. I now accepted thankfully from Providence the career of an androgyne.³⁷⁴

This pivotal moment in his life likely prompted him to reach out to the scientific establishment again several years later with his literary efforts to end the persecution of sexual variants.

With his newfound acceptance of his “nature,” at the age of nineteen Werther began his double life as “Jennie June,” a “fairy” street hustler, on the weekends and a

³⁷³ Werther, Autobiography, 74. It is worth underscoring here that Werther found—and absorbed—American as well as European texts on homosexuality during his visits to the medical library in the early 1890s.

³⁷⁴ Ralph Werther, Riddle of the Underworld (manuscript), 14, in the Victor Robinson Papers, 1898-1947 (MS C 28), History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine, Washington, D.C. It is unclear whether Riddle of the Underworld was ever published as a book, as was clearly Werther’s intention. The contract between Werther and Victor Robinson (included with Robinson’s edited copy of the Riddle manuscript in his papers at the NLM) for the text’s serialization in Medical Life in 1921 referenced its planned publication the following year and The Female-Impersonators contained a detailed advertisement for it; however, I found no record of it as a published book.

legal secretary during the week.³⁷⁵ “In 1893, at the age of nineteen, I count my adult life to have begun,” he wrote in Riddle of the Underworld. “In 1893 I finally concluded that medical science was helpless in the matter of rescuing me from the hands of Destiny.” And with the support of Dr. Newton, he then “ceased to struggle against Destiny.”³⁷⁶ He first solicited sex partners in a working-class Italian neighborhood in lower Manhattan, followed by several years working the Rialto for wealthier clientele. There, he developed a close network of fellow “androgynes,” which he called the “Cercle Hermaphroditos,” with the expressed intent of protecting each other against persecution.³⁷⁷ As Henry Minton writes in Departing from Deviance, “What stands out in Lind’s writings is his emancipatory spirit. Reflecting his self-perception, he equated homosexuality with congenitally based physical and emotional characteristics of the opposite sex. ‘Androgynes’ were thus men with male genitals, but with the souls of women.”³⁷⁸ When he was twenty-eight, Werther was finally castrated, a wish he had repeatedly expressed to doctors. In earlier years, he had claimed to seek castration in the hopes of obtaining a “normal” sex instinct; at twenty-eight, the procedure was ostensibly performed to correct spermatorrhea. However, Minton suggests that “his desire to be castrated may have actually satisfied a transsexual urge to become physically transformed into a woman,” a point that is well supported by Werther’s recollections of his early childhood.

In his introduction to Autobiography of an Androgyne, Herzog too expressed doubt that spermatorrhea was the true cause for the operation, remarking, “my belief is, that, feeling as a woman, desiring to be a woman and wishing to seem as much as

³⁷⁵ Minton, 24.

³⁷⁶ Werther, Riddle, 18.

³⁷⁷ Minton, 26.

³⁷⁸ Minton, 25.

possible like a woman to his male paramours, he hated above all the testicles, those insignia of manhood, and had them removed to be more alike to that which he wished to be.”³⁷⁹ Furthermore, by his late twenties, he had been adopting his Jennie June persona for years, to much local acclaim, Werther often boasted, and seemed to have little desire to change his sexual instinct.³⁸⁰ Werther’s castration, then, likely reflects his understanding and strategic manipulation of the medical establishment toward his own sexual emancipation and that of other congenital sexual variants.

Werther was keenly aware of scientists’ power to shape popular discourse and thus their potential to save individuals like himself from both social ostracism and arrest. And so, during the height of his part-time life as Jennie June in the 1890s, he began to work on his autobiography, which he hoped would promote sympathy for inverters among the medical community. This was his target audience—and the only audience obscenity laws would allow him to reach. Indeed, sale of his books was restricted to members of the medical and legal professions and, perhaps to ensure that the most titillating portions would be understood only by scientists even if the texts fell into the wrong hands, he frequently described sexual acts in Latin.³⁸¹ He finished the first book in 1899, but it was “fated to wait eighteen years for publication primarily because American medical publishers—on the basis of the attitude of the profession—have had an antipathy against books dealing with abnormal sexual phenomena.”³⁸² He eventually found a reticent but ultimately willing editor in Herzog and, despite his long road to publication, maintained his faith in the book’s potential to recruit scientific allies to the androgyne’s cause. “The

³⁷⁹ Herzog, “Introduction,” in *Autobiography of an Androgyne*, xi.

³⁸⁰ Minton, 27. See also Werther, *Autobiography*, 96-97.

³⁸¹ See for example, Lind, *Autobiography*, 96-97.

³⁸² Lind, *Autobiography*, 1.

author trusts that every medical man, every lawyer, and every other friend of science who reads this autobiography will thereby be moved to say a kind word for any of the despised and oppressed step-children of Nature—the sexually abnormal by birth—who may happen to be within his field of activity,” Werther wrote in 1918.³⁸³

Although Autobiography of an Androgyne did not sell as well as Herzog hoped, he agreed to publish Werther’s second book, The Female-Impersonators (1922), which was written “in a popular style for the general reader,” followed shortly after by Riddle of the Underworld, an expose of the characters he encountered in several urban “underworlds” “suitable for the scientific investigators to whom Autobiography was addressed.” Still, Werther insisted, “the scientific reader who is interested in my psychology and life experience should read all three.” The trilogy, he explained, “together set forth all phases of the life experience of a bisexual university ‘man.’”³⁸⁴

In these publications, Werther demonstrated that he was quite well versed in the scientific literature on homosexuality. He discussed the work of American and European scientists alike, finding much he liked in their biological models of sexual variance, while taking other scientists’ theories—and, often, their moral condescension—to task. Shufeldt, who Werther hailed as “one of America’s Foremost Medical Writers,” was quoted at length in The Female-Impersonators.³⁸⁵ Having received much practice in photographing anatomy in his Studies in the Human Form (1905), Shufeldt also contributed the nude photographs of Werther that peppered the second book of the trilogy. Moreover, even when Werther was not directly citing scientists’ work, he

³⁸³ Ibid, 3.

³⁸⁴ Werther, Riddle, 1.

³⁸⁵ Werther, The Female-Impersonators, 266-268.

frequently used their language to describe himself or his compatriots. He used the familiar terms “invert” and “intermediate” as well as his preferred “androgyne,” and like many scientists, he sometimes distinguished between “inversion” and “homosexuality” while using the terms interchangeably at other times. On several occasions, he also referred to himself as atavistic or an “atavistic.”³⁸⁶ But most often by far he used the term “congenital” to characterize his sexual variance, which he insisted was a product of biology and “Providence,” not “moral depravity.”

Werther grounded his claim to congenital “androgynism” on two factors: his bodily difference from “normal” men and his racial and class status. Throughout his writings, he emphasized his feminine physical features as well as his affinity for activities gendered female. He insisted that since boyhood he was frequently told that he “markedly resemble[d] a female physically, besides having instinctive gestures, poses, and habits that are characteristically feminine.” He provided an extensive list of the ways he differed from other men, including a high-pitched voice, skin “as soft as a woman’s,” silky hair, small features, “sacral dimples,” a broad pelvis, sparse body hair, and enlarged breasts. The popular influence of anthropometrics was still evident in the early twentieth century and he noted that he possessed “the feminine slope of shoulders and the feminine angle of arm.” In contrast, his penis was small “but entirely normal” and his “testicles were pronounced of normal appearance” by the surgeon who performed his castration. Overall, he concluded, he was physically attractive with a healthy and robust appearance. Werther’s presentation of his own physiognomy did not just mark his androgyny, though; it also underscored his whiteness (see Figure 4). From his creamy, much admired

³⁸⁶ See for example Werther, *Riddle of the Underworld*, 6, and *The Female-Impersonators*, 49.

complexion to his silky hair and “deep red” lips, his body disrupted sex binaries while simultaneously painting a picture of racial purity.³⁸⁷

Further refuting any possible argument that his inversion was a product of degeneracy, he traced his family’s history in detail to demonstrate he was of “good stock”—a term loaded with racial and class implications in early twentieth century America. He reported that the stock from which he came was both physically and morally sound and, over many generations, produced no criminals, only a few “half-wits” and one “mildly insane” cousin.³⁸⁸ Insisting that “androgynism is not moral depravity or degeneracy,” he held up his own bloodline as an example:

I myself—an extreme type of androgyne—spring from the most puritan stock. I was brought up to consider that on Sunday, reading anything but Christian doctrine or walking a hundred feet for mere pleasure were heinous sins. In addition to springing from the most puritan stock, both my paternal and maternal stock are of unusually strong build...My stock and early environment are indeed the last that any one would pick out as likely to bring into the world a homosexual or androgyne as a result of moral degradation.³⁸⁹

He pointed to examples of congenital sexual deviance among respectable whites outside his own family as well. According to Werther, one of his closest platonic friends in the “Underworld” was a voyeur who, like himself, could not help his innate sexual proclivities. Also like Werther, his voyeur friend hailed from an “ultra-Puritan” background, held a good job, and was well-educated and respectable in every other way. Indeed, “apart from his voyeurism and related idiosyncrasies, his entire life had probably been perfect ethically,” and he had never committed “the least offence against his fellow man.”³⁹⁰ Distinguishing between sexual desire and morality, he declared:

³⁸⁷ Lind, *Autobiography*, 10-13.

³⁸⁸ Lind, *Autobiography*, 28.

³⁸⁹ Werther, *The Female-Impersonators*, 45-46.

³⁹⁰ Werther, *Riddle*, 3-6. Underlining is Werther’s.

An intermediate can reach as high a level ethically and religiously as the sexually normal. Except on this one side of life, the intermediate is like all other people. And on this one side—which, exclusive of the thoughts, originally claims only a small fraction of the man's, woman's, or intermediate's time—it is not a whit more immoral or irreligious to live in the manner ordained for 'him-her' by Destiny than for the normally sexed to live as ordained for them.³⁹¹

An admirably emancipatory message to be sure, but in divorcing ethical and religious levels from sexual proclivities, he instead tied them to race and class. In the racial logic of the early twentieth century, the very fact that Werther and his friends were white and middle class proved their sexual variance could not derive from degeneracy or general immorality and must instead be a congenital anomaly.

In contrast, Werther juxtaposed himself and his friends with the “vicious classes” he encountered in the “Underworld”—namely immigrants, African Americans, and the poor. Whereas he, the other androgynes in his “Cercle Hermaphrodites,” and his voyeur friend were all congenital sexual variants and “perfect ethically,” sexual deviance among other groups was simply indicative of the general moral degeneracy of that race and/or class. Of course, the fact that linking “degeneracy” to an entire race would seem to denote an inherited trait of some kind—a congenital phenomenon—was an irony lost on Werther. In another ironic note, he negatively portrayed his frequent and much desired partners, Italian immigrant “toughs,” as morally lax and sexually indiscriminate precisely because they had had sex with him. Werther engaged in sex with men because his biology dictated it; his “virile” partners did so because they cared little how or with whom they found sexual release. Also in keeping with contemporary racial stereotypes, he recounted that his voyeur friend would often happen on “a picnic of the uncultured...particularly of the emotional African race, who were numerous in the large

³⁹¹ Werther, Riddle, 17.

city in which we then resided” in the park he frequented. There, he would hide in the bushes with his binoculars “to make a study of the young bucks and wenches” who were “rendered delirious on the dance-platform.” The same park grove was a popular sexual trysting spot for “love-sick couples of the lower class of Caucasians,” Werther added. In this account, it was the black “bucks and wenches” and lower-class whites who were morally suspect, even if his friend was admittedly spying on them from the bushes.³⁹²

Having firmly established his whiteness, Werther sought to disprove “the claim that intermediates constitute a horrible menace to the perpetuation of the race.”³⁹³ Homosexuals were often charged with “race suicide” by scientists and, he noted, sometimes even by the law. In The Female-Impersonators, he described an incident in which a friend, brought up on sodomy charges, reported, “The judge said: ‘It is as heinous as murder, because it strikes at the very existence of the race! No one but a criminal of the deepest dye could descend to it! Frank White, you have been convicted of the awful felony of race suicide!’” Notably, Werther generally created pseudonyms for his acquaintances as well as himself; it is unlikely an accident that he gave the man accused of “race suicide” the surname White.³⁹⁴ “There is no ground for the charge that the passive invert’s practices are aimed at the very existence of the race,” Werther asserted. “In the first place, Nature made him psychically impotent from birth. In the second place, his practices could not be spread by example. They are regarded by all normally constituted males with such disgust and aversion that practically no one would stoop to them except those born with peculiar cravings.”³⁹⁵ He also suggested that it was

³⁹² Werther, Riddle, 3-4.

³⁹³ Ibid, 17.

³⁹⁴ Lind, The Female-Impersonators, 195-196.

³⁹⁵ Werther, Autobiography, 23.

not “high-minded homosexuals” who imperiled the race, it was the physicians who all too frequently encouraged them to marry the opposite sex as a cure for their “homosexual tendencies.” “Chronic and extreme homosexuality is congenital and incurable,” Werther maintained, and “it is monstrous to advise even a mild androgyne to marry, and thus contribute to propagating a line of unhappy and unwelcome bisexuals down through the centuries.”³⁹⁶

Seemingly contradicting this bleak assessment of “unhappy and unwelcome bisexuals,” elsewhere Werther asserted that androgynes reflected the pinnacle of civilization. They comprised civilization’s most accomplished artists, musicians, and writers and were thus an asset to the race, not a threat or detriment. His “own impression” was that “sexual intermediates occur far more often among the brainy than among the brawny.” Likewise, he “once read the declaration of a sexologist that ‘sexual inversion is particularly common among authors’”—a rather ironic claim considering how many of the turn-of-the-century scientists discussed here tried their hands at popular writing.³⁹⁷ Shufeldt, for example, wrote birding guides and contributed work to The Century, among other periodicals. A contributor to the Saturday Evening Post and the Ladies Home Journal, Howard also pitched an eleventh-century Icelandic romance to The Century as a serialized novel and in 1901 published a novel drawn from his scientific work on sex, entitled The Perverts.³⁹⁸ Daniel wrote a folksy memoir of his Civil War experiences as

³⁹⁶ Lind, The Female-Impersonators, 20-21. It is worth noting that Werther is using homosexuality and “androgynism” relatively interchangeably here. In addition, he is using “bisexual” to mean “androgyne” or “intermediate,” not in the current sense of the word, which indicates sexual object choice.

³⁹⁷ Werther, Riddle, 30. Note that the pagination here refers to the 30th page of the manuscript; the typed number at the top of the page reads “7” because Werther often restarted the pagination at the beginning of individual chapters (but unfortunately not consistently, creating even more difficulties for citation).

³⁹⁸ See Century Company Records. Series 1: General Correspondence. Box 91 [R.W. Shufeldt] and Century Company Records. Series 1: General Correspondence. Box 48 [William Lee Howard],

well as a science fiction novel, while Lydston wrote a travel memoir, a novel, and a play in support of eugenics.³⁹⁹

Werther's own writings illustrate the complex and dynamic relationship he had with the medical establishment. Facing public ridicule and the constant threat of arrest, Werther reached out to scientists as potential emancipators. The "vast majority of even the medical profession" remained ignorant of or resistant to the androgyne's plight, so he appealed to them as modern, civilized men and rational scientists:

In former centuries, the "high-brows" burnt the unfortunates at the stake or buried them alive, just as today the benighted savages of Africa, animated by horror and loathing, bury alive, as soon as born, an albino infant. Only since the latter part of the nineteenth century, a handful of sexologists have been bold enough to proclaim that intermediates are often victims of birth, and irresponsible for their idiosyncrasy.⁴⁰⁰

In no doubt deliberately provocative terms, Werther asked scientists to cast their lot with the most progressive among their peers, instead of mimicking the superstitious derision of difference exhibited by "savages"! Indeed, "only bigoted pseudo-scientists have pronounced androgynes degenerates. Only medieval medicine, not modern medicine."⁴⁰¹

To be sure, the scientific paternalism of sexologists like Herzog and Lydston hardly offered a positive depiction of sexual variation and presented its own set of problems that continue to resonate today. Moreover, Werther's texts, as well as the work of the American sexologists upon whom he drew for legitimacy and support, reveal that

Manuscripts and Archives Division, Humanities and Social Sciences Library, New York Public Library. William Lee Howard, The Perverts (New York: G.W. Dillingham Co, 1901).

³⁹⁹ F.E. Daniel, Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon (and other sketches), or In the Doctor's Sappy Days (Austin, Tex., Von Boeckmann, Schutze and Co., 1899) and The Strange Case of Dr. Bruno (Austin, Tex., Von Boeckmann, Schutze and Co., 1906), respectively, and G. Frank Lydston, Panama and the Sierras: A Doctor's Wander Days (Chicago: Riverton Press, 1900), Over the Hookah: The Tales of a Talkative Doctor (Chicago, F. Klein Co., 1896), and The Blood of the Fathers: A Play in Four Acts (Chicago: F. Klein Co., 1912), respectively.

⁴⁰⁰ Werther, Riddle, 16.

scientific sympathy for some depended on the demonization of others, often along racial and class lines. Still, it is not difficult to understand why medical paradigms of homosexuality as a pathology, defect, or disease were for some a welcome alternative to the police harassment, legal prosecution, religious condemnation, and physical violence that Werther describes in his work. And as we will see in the next chapter, it was also not the last time that strategic alliances would be formed between scientists and their human subjects.

Conclusion

Racial scientists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were deeply concerned about sex. They were particularly worried about homosexuality among whites, which threatened the race from within, and, as the next chapter will discuss, black male sexual aggression, which posed a threat from outside. Racialized language abounded in scientific studies of sex and for American scientists, homosexuality had clear implications for the fate of the races and their relationship to each other. Indeed, inversion and homosexuality—which numerous scientists interpreted as a form of evolutionary regression or degeneracy—imperiled the forward march of civilization and the stability of the middle class. And these scientists often accused white homosexuals of “race suicide,” a damning charge at a time when the fate of mankind was largely understood as a racial competition. In this context, then, America’s prominent scientists of race became the country’s first sexologists.

Speaking to intersecting concerns over race and sex, these scientists sought to cement their authority in American society. “The subject of sexual perversion,” in

⁴⁰¹ Lind, *The Female-Impersonators*, 49.

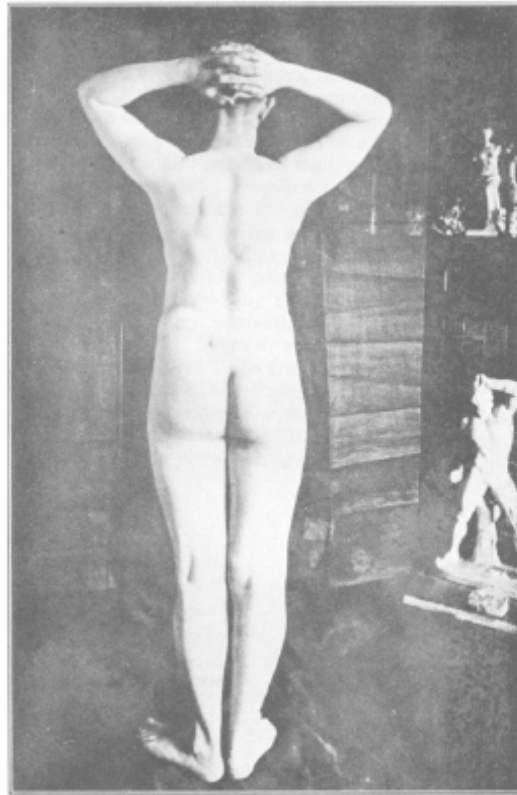
particular, “although a disagreeable one for discussion, demands the attention of the scientific physician, and is of great importance in its social, medical, and legal relations,” Lydston wrote in 1917. With the very future of civilization at stake, scientists insisted that the nascent field of sexology must be taken seriously in the United States. “Inverts” and “perverts” were frequently “victims of a physical, and incidentally of a psychic, defect” and thus required study by the “scientific physician,” not the “moralist” to whom authority over such matters was far too often given.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰² Lydston, “Sexual Perversion and Inversion” in Impotence and Sterility, with Aberrations of the Sexual Function and Sex-Gland Implantation (Chicago: Riverton Press, 1917), 31.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 3.1. "Front View of Author at Thirty-three," The Female-Impersonators (Ralph Werther, 1922)



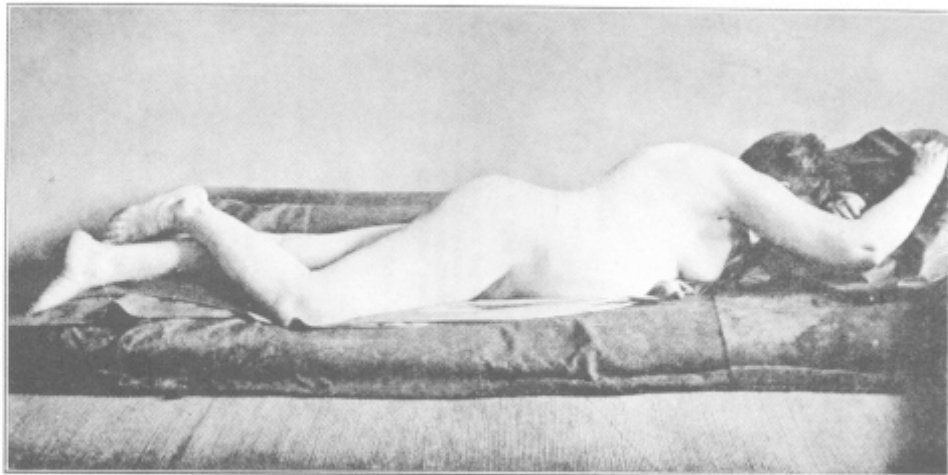
Rear View of Author at Thirty-three
(Photo by Dr. R. W. Shufeldt)

Figure 3.2. “Rear View of Author at Thirty-three,” The Female-Impersonators (Ralph Werther, 1922)



The "Fairie Boy" Ready to Set Out on Life's Journey

Figure 3.3. "Fairie Boy," The Female-Impersonators (Ralph Werther, 1922)



The Author—a Modern Living Replica of the Ancient Greek Statue, "Hermaphroditos"
(Photo by Dr. A. W. Herzog)

Figure 3.4. "Hermaphroditos," The Female-Impersonators (Ralph Werther, 1922)

Chapter Four—Unsexing the Race: Lynching, Racial Science, and Black Mobilization, 1893-1934

In a chapter of his autobiography entitled “I Learn What I Am,” National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leader Walter White described a formative event early in his life that awakened him to the harsh realities of racial violence and precipitated his career as an anti-lynching activist. White depicted his harrowing experience of the 1906 race riots in Atlanta when he was thirteen years old. That September, while accompanying his father George on his mail delivery route, young Walter watched in horror from their buggy as a crippled black man tried to outrun an angry white mob before being beaten to death and left in a pool of blood in the street. As they drove home through the streets of Atlanta, their white appearance afforded them a modicum of safety from the mobs attacking black citizens at random. That night, however, they huddled in their house with the lights off as the mob headed toward their neighborhood, the threat of more violence imminent. Tipped off that the house belonged to a “nigger mail carrier,” the mob approached the White home. White recalled, “In the flickering light the mob swayed, paused, and began to flow toward us. In that instant there opened up within me a great awareness; I knew then who I was. I was a Negro, a human being with an invisible pigmentation which marked me a person to be hunted, hanged, abused, discriminated against, kept in poverty and ignorance, in order that those whose skin was white would have readily at hand a proof of their superiority....”⁴⁰³

Though the mob was driven off by the Whites’ neighbors, the close call left Walter shaken and keenly aware of his racial identity and the social position it afforded him.

⁴⁰³ Walter White, A Man Called White (New York: Arno Press, 1969, 1948), 9-11.

White would think of the incident often in his work with the anti-lynching campaign launched by the NAACP, an organization he led for over twenty years.

The year of White's birth, 1893, proved a watershed moment in the history of lynching. It saw the first modern spectacle lynching, as historians have come to characterize the brutal, ritualized torture and murders, most frequently of African Americans, in front of large, enraptured and often cheering crowds.⁴⁰⁴ The lynching of Henry Smith, accused of raping a four-year-old white girl, took place on February 1, 1893, in Paris, Texas, and was attended by approximately 10,000 people, thousands of whom had come by train from neighboring counties and states to witness Smith burned alive. The lynching was announced in advance, businesses in Paris were closed, and schools dismissed by the Mayor so that everyone might attend.

However, 1893 was also an important year in black mobilization against lynching. The year marked Ida B. Wells' first tour of England and Scotland to raise awareness about American lynch law. There, she turned civilization discourse on its head, calling into question whether white men were themselves more savage than civilized for their brutal displays of violence.⁴⁰⁵ Born that year, Walter White would grow up to inherit Wells' legacy as an anti-lynching crusader. His work with the NAACP in the 1920s and 1930s brought unprecedented attention to lynching, which he linked in part to America's tradition of scientific racism.

In his influential 1929 exposé, Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch, White described the "various ingredients of lynching" as "economic forces, race

⁴⁰⁴ For more on spectacle lynchings, see in particular Grace Elizabeth Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation (New York: Vintage, 1999), 199-240.

⁴⁰⁵ See Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 45-76

prejudice, religion, sex, politics, journalism, and theories of racial superiority and inferiority based upon faulty or insufficient scientific evidence.”⁴⁰⁶ He further noted that ethnological writing that championed white supremacy, which he called “Nordicism,” incited “prejudice and fear among those who would not consider joining such a movement as the Ku Klux Klan.” “Nordicism” was simply the respectable face of the same worldview that drove the Klan: “Thus the Klan recruited the more rowdy element, and the Nordic movement those of slightly higher mental caliber—and between them profoundly influenced the already tense racial situation in the United States and added to the antagonisms from which such a phenomenon as lynchings arises.” While racial science was increasingly being challenged at the time of White’s writing in 1929, biological paradigms of racial difference lingered on in some scientific circles in the United States and their continued influence outside the scientific establishment was far-reaching. As White noted, “The lyncher, the Klansman, the Nordacist, the disenfranchiser, [and] the opponent of advancement of the Negro or other dark-skinned race” reinforced for each other “the fundamental soundness of their prejudices.” Moreover, “‘Scientific jargon’ which they did not know was jargon assured them that the Negro is inferior and that it is for the general good to ‘keep him in his place.’”⁴⁰⁷

By the 1890s white American scientists had spent nearly a century attempting to prove that racial hierarchy was biological and permanent. They invariably described people of African descent as irrevocably inferior in mind and body and thus placed them at the bottom of this natural order. Moreover, by the turn of the century, they

⁴⁰⁶ Walter White, Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), viii-ix.

⁴⁰⁷ White, Rope and Faggot, 115-116.

characterized black bodies not just as inferior, but also as threatening. Black men in particular were characterized as overly libidinous and aggressive, prone to a racially specific sexual perversion that drove them to rape white women. No idle chatter, this scientific racial discourse had all too tangible effects on living human beings. American scientists played a key role in constructing the popular image of black men as a sexual menace and grounding it in the physical body; in turn, this negative assessment of black men was often used outside the scientific establishment to justify lynching. Largely condemning lynch violence, however, scientists offered their own suggestions for how these threatening bodies should be treated or controlled.

Representing a wide array of fields, including biology, criminal anthropology, eugenics, anatomy, sexology, medicine, and social hygiene, American scientists frequently commented on lynching. And, beginning in 1893, scientists began to suggest that castration would be more effective, humane, and progressive than lynching for dealing with the “negro problem.” With activists like Wells embarrassing America on a world stage for its complicity in extralegal violence, U.S. scientists came down on the side of law and order. But their frequent recommendation of castration as an alternative to lynching was as much about their concern for the authority of science over American race relations as it was about the authority of the law. The “castration remedy” represented a culmination of racial scientists’ longstanding use of gender, sex, and sexuality to bolster their claims about the innate and permanent inferiority of black people. Thus, while mostly condemning lynch law, these scientists nonetheless saw the rape of white women by black men as a serious—and growing—threat that needed to be addressed by those with proven expertise in the intricacies of race. They often asserted

that lynching was not effective as a preventative and that rape was a pathology that needed medical intervention. Moreover, because scientists saw black men's alleged propensity toward rape as rooted in the body, specifically the sexed body, they recommended a bodily—and distinctly genital—solution.

America's foremost experts on race and sex contributed to the decades-long conversation among scientists about castration and lynching, which also extended into the popular press. G. Frank Lydston and F.E. Daniel in particular published on the issue for nearly twenty years. Most of these scientists offered at least a mild rebuke of the lynchers themselves, but rarely challenged the stereotypes of black male sexuality that drove public discourse on lynching; quite the opposite, they helped to create and lend scientific authority to such stereotypes. Indeed, there was no clear divide between scientific and public discourse on lynching, or as Walter White argued in the 1920s, even between scientific theories and public action. Castration in particular represented a point of intersection between science and the street. Even as scientists like Lydston and Daniel tried to present the two as separate domains, racial science and popular discourse on lynching shared language, imagery, and a highly charged set of assumptions about race, gender, sex, and power in America. And more viscerally, the "surgical procedure" that scientists advocated as an alternative to death at the hands of a lynch mob instead became a frequent component of the lynching ritual.

This chapter, then, explores the interplay between scientific and public discourse on lynching and the ideas about race and sex that inhabited this nexus. In particular, it argues that from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s, emasculation was central to both discussions and practices of lynching as well as racial scientists' proposed

medico-legal alternatives to mob violence. While scientists like Lydston and Daniel presented themselves as offering a solution to lynching, Walter White insisted racial science had long incited racial violence. As we shall see, with the clear overlap between lynching and castration in science and in the street, it is difficult to disagree with him. But White also saw potential for racial science to be used against itself and thus enlisted the help of scientists to disprove black inferiority, with the explicit goal of combating lynch law. Finally then, this chapter examines the importance Walter White placed on exposing and debunking racial science's central tenets during his involvement in the NAACP's anti-lynching campaign. Racial science may have reinforced widespread beliefs about black inferiority and danger that made lynching possible, but it also provided a lightening rod for black challenges to racism and their mobilization against racial violence.

“Castration Instead of Lynching”: Science Confronts Violence

On March 11, 1893, one month after Henry Smith was burned alive in Texas, Hunter McGuire, a respected Richmond physician, professor, and president of the American Medical Association, wrote an open letter to G. Frank Lydston, then Professor of Genito-Urinary Surgery at the Chicago College of Physicians and Surgeons, seeking “some scientific explanation of the sexual perversion in the negro of the present day.”⁴⁰⁸ The Smith lynching demonstrated that the punishment for such perversion was swift and severe, McGuire noted matter-of-factly, and, he added, entirely inevitable. In response, Lydston proposed castration as both a solution to sexual crimes and an alternative to lynching, which he deemed ineffective as a deterrent against sexual crimes. McGuire's

letter and Lydston's lengthy response five days later were published in the Maryland Medical Journal and later reprinted in book form, under the title Sexual Crimes Among the Southern Negroes, Scientifically Considered.

McGuire and Lydston's correspondence launched a conversation among scientists that lasted three decades and spanned medical—and some popular—publications across the country. Lydston himself returned to the question repeatedly in numerous publications. Writing explicitly in dialogue with one another, scientists considering the “castration versus lynching” question demonstrated near consensus on several key points. For one, these scientists represented a uniform front in perpetuating the rhetoric of black hypersexuality common to popular discourse on lynching. Second, most scientists in what I loosely call the “castration or lynching” debate explained black men's supposed propensity toward rape as rooted in their biology. Third, as criticism of American lynch law mounted amidst the anti-lynching publicity campaigns launched by Ida Wells and later the NAACP, scientists offered at least a perfunctory rebuke of extralegal violence. Few did so out of purely humanitarian concerns or belief in racial equality, however. These scientists questioned not so much the morality of lynching, but its effectiveness as a punishment or preventative. And most notably, nearly all of the scientists agreed that castration was preferable to lynching for dealing with what they saw as an ever-growing threat—black sexual predators. Castration, then, was a two-fold solution to interrelated problems; it addressed both the troubling cause, black rape, and its disturbing effect, lynching.

⁴⁰⁸ Hunter McGuire and G. Frank Lydston, Sexual Crimes Among the Southern Negroes (Louisville: Renz and Henry, 1893), 1.

Like Lydston, other scientists who advocated castration as an alternative to lynching also viewed themselves as progressive reformers, saving society from black men and black men from themselves.⁴⁰⁹ By pathologizing the “black beast rapist,” turning a popular racial trope into a disease, scientists created a cultural need for their medical expertise. Even more than lynching’s ineffectiveness or inhumanity, scientists’ objections to the practice revealed their concern for scientific authority, particularly over racial matters. Just as ethnologists half a century earlier had presented themselves as experts on the pressing racial issue of the day—slavery—so too did turn-of-the-century racial scientists weigh in on lynching. Scientists’ proposition that surgical castration might offer an alternative to lynching laid bare similar issues of authority—the authority of the scientist on social and political problems versus the power of the public—by suggesting that medicine rather than the law or vigilantism offered the solution to America’s “race problem.”

Scientists in the “castration or lynching” debate diverged, however, on precisely what sexual modification should be performed on black rapists and toward what ends. Some scientists used the term “castration” broadly, to refer a range of possible genital surgeries. Others hailed the benefits of one specific procedure over others, including removal of the testicles, vasectomy, or circumcision. The exact surgical procedure a

⁴⁰⁹ Ronald Bayer’s *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) provides an excellent model for challenging traditional assumptions about medicine’s social aims and easy conclusions about its conservative or restrictive intentions. Bayer demonstrates that while gay activists understandably and successfully (in 1973) lobbied to have homosexuality removed from the DSM as a psychiatric disease, the scientists who saw its initial addition to and continued place in the DSM saw themselves as helping rather than hurting homosexuals. And, Bayer argues, in some way they did—these scientists insisted that homosexuality was a disease that the afflicted could not help and thus they should not be criminally prosecuted or cruelly ridiculed by society. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century scientists such as Lydston positioned themselves similarly regarding castration versus lynching. While today their ideas seem anything but progressive, at the time these

scientist advocated correlated to how much emphasis he placed on individual punishment or cure versus large-scale prevention. Over time, scientists who advocated surgical remedies for black rape adopted increasingly expansive definitions of “prevention” and often increasingly eugenic aims. That is, some scientists believed castration could not only offer rape control in the short term, but also contribute to a eugenic agenda of race control in the long term. Still, scientists in this “debate” shared one thing in common: they saw black rape as a social problem demanding a medical solution.

Racial science could make strange bedfellows and McGuire’s correspondence with Lydston was no exception. The two men had both served as military surgeons, Lydston, a native of California, New York, Maine, and Chicago, during the Spanish American War and McGuire for the Confederacy in the Civil War, in which he gained prominence as the physician who operated on Stonewall Jackson and tended to him on his deathbed. McGuire remained fiercely loyal to the South after the War.⁴¹⁰ Perceiving anti-southern bias throughout the world of medicine, he devoted much of his career to enhancing the scientific authority of southern physicians. As the president of the Southern Surgical and Gynecological Association in the late 1880s, he rallied southern physicians to the cause of elevating the reputation of southern medicine by appealing to their manhood and sense of honor. “As Southern men, let us show to the world that, under changed conditions, we have still the stamina of our forefathers,” he implored. “As

scientists saw themselves as a voice of reason amidst a society meting out increasingly brutal torture in the streets.

⁴¹⁰ James O. Breeden, “McGuire, Hunter Holmes,” <http://www.anb.org/articles/12/12-00600.html>; *American National Biography Online* February 2000. American Council of Learned Societies, Published by Oxford University Press.

members of our beloved profession, let us strive to be first in scientific attainment, first in integrity, first in high purpose for the good of mankind.”⁴¹¹

Given McGuire’s veneration of southern medicine, his decision to seek Lydston’s expertise on the South’s “race problem” may seem surprising. But the two men traveled in the same scientific circles and belonged to many of the same medical associations. Moreover, like McGuire, Lydston worried about his authority as a scientist; throughout his career, Lydston expressed frustration that his studies of sex were not recognized as legitimate science. Most importantly, as their correspondence indicates, given Lydston’s well-known expertise in criminal anthropology and social hygiene McGuire felt confident that he would be sympathetic to the South on issues of race, even if he had never lived there himself. Scientific concern about the “negro rapist” transcended political affinities or regional alliances.

Both scientific paternalists, the two men of very different upbringings publicly joined forces in 1893 to save white civilization from the negro and the negro from himself. The flip side to antebellum paternalists who claimed African Americans were thriving under slavery, McGuire—and many of his contemporaries—maintained that the race was dying out in the wake of emancipation. McGuire’s emphasis on the “frightful survival of the fittest” in his discussion of “negro rape” implied that black men’s alleged hypersexuality might rest in part from a biological drive to fend off their own demise, all at the expense of white chastity.

⁴¹¹ Hunter McGuire, Address of the President before the Southern Surgical and Gynecological Association, at the meeting held in Nashville, Tennessee November 13, 1889 (Philadelphia: WM. J. Dornan, 1890), 13-14. It is worth noting that McGuire received medical training in Philadelphia, the medical capital of the country in the nineteenth century. But as tensions mounted between the North and South in the late 1850s, McGuire led a contingent of nearly 250 Southern medical students in protest out of Philadelphia.

McGuire had read Lydston's essay, "Sexual Perversion," with much interest. With Lydston's expertise on matters of sexual deviance, McGuire hoped he would have some insight on a phenomenon which he considered a form of sexual perversion, "rape by a negro of a white woman." In his letter to Lydston, McGuire insisted the phenomenon was "almost unknown...before the late war between the States." Since then, he maintained, "the newspapers tell us how common it is," taking the validity of such reports at face value. Swift and certain death was the punishment. He explained, "This is the unwritten law of every community in the South; from it there is no appeal. It is immutable, and is sustained by every living white in the community in which the crime occurs. I am not engaged here in defending this law, although it is easy to do it. I am only trying to give you some facts on which to base your opinion, in a purely scientific discussion."

The south had its own way of dealing with the problem of "sexual crimes among the Southern negroes"—lynching—but what McGuire sought was a scientific explanation for the crimes. "It is not the legal, social, moral or political aspect of this perverted sexuality in the negro upon which I ask your opinion," McGuire stated. These perspectives had shed little light on the problem, so McGuire asked Lydston to "investigate it as a scientific physician—one who has devoted much to this and kindred matters." Quick to throw around the label of "perversion," McGuire accused northern journalists who reported on lynching and saw "only the fearful spectacle of a hung, burnt, or shot negro" and not the "innocent, mutilated, and ruined female victim," as themselves suffering from a "perversion of mind and heart." McGuire trusted that Lydston, as a

fellow man of science, would know better and focus on the real issue at hand: the black man's "sexual perversion" rather than the nature of southern punishment.⁴¹²

Lydston, for his part, did indeed offer a scientific explanation—"furor sexualis" characterized by "abnormal passions" compounded by a lack of self-control—for the problem of "sexual crimes among Southern negroes." Lydston insisted that "furor sexualis," a sexual disorder first described in 1885 by Lydston's Chicago colleague, sexologist James Kiernan, was innate.⁴¹³ He suggested that black men were especially prone to rape by the specific nature of their biology compounded by current environmental conditions. "In considering the special causes which account for the frequency with which the crime of rape is perpetuated by the negro in this country, several factors must be taken into consideration," Lydston posited. As demonstrated earlier, scientists in the last two decades of the nineteenth century often characterized black men as simultaneously too much man and not man enough. They embodied brute masculinity without the manly restraint and rationality of civilization. Summarizing this body of scientific thought on black male sexuality under the rubric of "furor sexualis, he listed the following environmental and biological factors, each of which he elaborated on at length:

1. Hereditary influences descending from the uncivilized ancestors of our negroes.
2. A disproportionate development of the animal propensities incidental to a relatively low degree of differentiation of type.
3. A relatively defective development of what may be termed the centers of psychological inhibition.
4. Physical degeneracy involving chiefly the higher and more recently acquired attributes, with a distinct tendency to reversion of type, which reversion is especially manifest in the direction of sexual proclivities.

⁴¹² McGuire and Lydston, 2-4.

⁴¹³ McGuire and Lydston, 17.

5. The removal of certain inhibitions placed upon the negro by the conditions which slavery imposed upon him; these were removed by his liberation.
6. An inherent inadaptability to his environment both from a moral and legal standpoint, the result of his inadaptability being an imperfect or perverted conception of his relations to his environment—i.e. to the body social.
7. An incapacity of appreciation of the dire results to himself of sexual crimes.⁴¹⁴

Scientists referenced Lydston's summary of black sexual degeneracy for decades, while generally ignoring his frequent call for color-blind justice. As he said on behalf of congenital inverts, discussed previously, Lydston argued that black men needed treatment not punishment, for their own benefit and the protection of society as a whole.

Consequently, Lydston saw the “‘Southern method’ of dealing with the criminality of the negro” as deeply problematic. He assured McGuire that he recognized “the liberality of my Southern friends—of whom I believe no Northern doctor has more than myself” and sympathized with the problem they faced.⁴¹⁵ Lydston was “opposed to capital punishment, legal or illegal,” but not for “sentimental” reasons. “From a utilitarian standpoint,” it simply did not achieve its stated goal of decreasing crime. “On the contrary,” he argued, “capital punishment seemed to have a direct effect in increasing the savagery of, and lessening the respect for human life entertained by, the body social.” Referencing the well-publicized lynching of Henry Smith the previous month, Lydston continued, “I am not inclined to captiously criticize, mind you, the typical Southern method of dealing with negro ravishers—for I would probably be as quick to act similarly under like circumstances—but do you think that any reasoning whatever could justify the recent roasting of a negro ravisher in one of the Southern States?”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ McGuire and Lydston, 7-16.

⁴¹⁵ McGuire and Lydston, 5-6.

⁴¹⁶ McGuire and Lydston, 21.

Lydston offered a scientific solution to “negro ravishers” and its attendant problem, lynching: castration, the “only one logical method of dealing with capital crimes and criminals of the habitual class.” He proclaimed, “Executed, they would be forgotten; castrated and free, they would be a constant warning and ever-present admonition to others of their race.” Though it is hard to imagine that the black community of Paris, Texas, would quickly forget Henry Smith’s horrific death, Lydston insisted that castration would better serve as a “wholesome warning to criminals of like propensities.” It was a common belief in social hygiene, criminal anthropology, and eugenics—all scientific endeavors with which Lydston was associated—that criminal behavior was passed from one generation to the next. Thus castration of “negro ravishers” had an additional benefit: “It prevents the criminal from perpetuating his kind.” Furthermore, he added, “A few emasculated negroes scattered around through the thickly-settled negro communities of the South would really prove the conservation of energy, as far as the repression of sexual crimes is concerned.” For Lydston, the most efficient way to control an entire race was to inhibit the sexual capacities of a few individual men.

By castrating “negro ravishers,” Lydston avowed, “the murderer is likely to lose much of his savageness; the violator loses not only the desire but the capacity for a repetition of his crime, if the operation be supplemented by penile mutilation according to the Oriental method.”⁴¹⁷ Here, Lydston hinted at the complex genealogy of castrating human beings. In Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood, Gary Taylor demonstrates that castration has meant different things in different times and places. In

⁴¹⁷ McGuire and Lydston, 22.

many historical contexts, “although they lacked the power to breed, eunuchs were not impotent in any other sense. Castrated human males could be exceptionally powerful.”⁴¹⁸ Even then, however, the eunuch was often associated in Western culture with a racial “other” (usually “oriental”) and with servitude.⁴¹⁹

Castration in America was a part of this genealogy, but it was also shaped by the country’s unique racial circumstances. And in this U.S. context, castration was never a source of power. It was mandated as a punishment for slaves in several colonial statutes, and antebellum planters occasionally castrated their slaves to control unruly behavior.⁴²⁰ Planters also castrated weak, small, or unhealthy slaves to prevent them from producing similarly impaired children, although this practice was relatively rare.⁴²¹ Furthermore, as Lydston himself noted, Gideon Lincecum, a Texas physician, proposed that castration was more humane and appropriate than (legal) execution for a host of crimes.⁴²² Lincecum argued, “It is the animal and not the intellectual portion of our organic structure that commits crime and does violence”.⁴²³ He shared his views in an 1854 essay he disseminated to over six hundred legislators, newspapers, and doctors after which he

⁴¹⁸ Taylor, 37-38. As Taylor explains, in harem societies, eunuchs were the guardians of female chastity, a position of considerable importance in cultures that placed tremendous emphasis on patrilineal bloodlines of inheritance and rule. In other contexts, eunuchs castrated after puberty were considered lusty and desirable lovers—they could still perform sexually without the risk of pregnancy, and thus were sometimes considered powerfully threatening in these contexts, because of their sexuality not a lack of it. Castration could also be associated with religious devotion, with men who had transcended temptations of the flesh and worldly concerns. Many of the roles of the classical eunuch involved some degree of power, influence, or social esteem: “In the world before Freud, castration could produce a powerful voice, a powerful general, a powerful intimate of women and emperors, a powerful spirituality” (41-43).

⁴¹⁹ See for example Taylor, 76-77.

⁴²⁰ See Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1968), 154-155 and Diane Sommerville *Rape and Race in the Nineteenth Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁴²¹ Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 28.

⁴²² G. Frank Lydston, “Sex Mutilations as a Remedy for Social Ills” (1912), 2.

⁴²³ Quoted in Philip R. Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 28.

was widely ridiculed. However, as medical historian Philip Reilly notes, “a few years later in 1864 a jury in Belton, Texas, convicted a Negro of rape and recommended castration, a sentence that was carried out.”⁴²⁴

Castration, then, had already enjoyed a long history in America by the 1893 lynching of Henry Smith and the publication of Lydston’s often cited article. The growing popularity of eugenics in the 1890s ushered in a more receptive environment for castration proposals. As scientists discussed castration’s possible application to the problems of black rape and lynching, involuntary sterilization was being debated and enacted in other American contexts. At the height of eugenics’ popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, state institutions oversaw the sterilization—often involuntary—of over sixty thousand people suffering from mental illness or retardation.⁴²⁵ Between 1907 and 1921, fifteen states—none of them southern—passed legislation allowing for the sterilization of “defective persons” and 2,558 procedures were performed during that period in California alone.⁴²⁶ A number of the same scientists, most notably Texas physician and eugenicist F.E. Daniel, who advocated castration as an alternative for lynching, had also lobbied on behalf of state sterilization

⁴²⁴ Reilly, 28-29.

⁴²⁵ Reilly, xiii. Many of the patients were told they were being operated on for medical reasons, most often appendectomy, and few were informed after the fact that they had been sterilized while under the knife. On involuntary sterilization and eugenics in America, see also Harry Bruinius, Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America’s Quest for Racial Purity (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

⁴²⁶ Reilly, 49. On eugenic discourse in the south, see Edward Larson, Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1995). Larson shows that while eugenic discourse was alive and well in the south, sterilization was not put into law the way it was in other parts of the country early in the twentieth century. Eugenics was largely a progressive movement, espoused by elite, often urban reformers, and many Southerners remained suspicious. This began to change in the South in the 1930s; most notably, as Johanna Schoen discusses in Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), North Carolina passed a state sterilization act in 1929 and performed growing numbers of sterilizations after World War II as other states saw sharp drops.

legislation. Other scientists, including Lydston and Daniel, recommended castration for masturbation, which many saw as either a form of insanity or exacerbating mental illness. In fact, Daniel advocated castration “as a penalty for all sexual crimes or misdemeanors, including masturbation.”⁴²⁷

And castration was not just talk for scientists. Before any legislation had been passed to permit compulsory sterilization, Dr. Hoyt Pilcher, superintendent of the Winfield (Kansas) Asylum for Idiots and Feeble-minded Youths, admitted in 1894 that he had “castrated” fourteen girls and forty-four boys under his care.⁴²⁸ The ensuing controversy cost Pilcher his job, but a number of vocal scientists also spoke out on his behalf; among them, again, was Daniel.⁴²⁹ And numerous scholars have shown that the United States exported eugenic ideology to its imperial interests, a product of the common belief that poor and racially inferior peoples were reproducing at a much higher rate than middle-class American whites.⁴³⁰ A range of reproductive or genital surgeries—

⁴²⁷ F.E. Daniel, “Castration of Sexual Perverts,” *Texas Medical Journal*, 27:10 (April 1912): 378.

⁴²⁸ While we tend to use the word “castration” mostly in reference to men, the term can also refer to the surgical removal of women’s ovaries—a fairly common linguistic usage in the nineteenth century. It is also possible that by saying he castrated the fourteen girls, he was referring to clitoridectomy; while not as common as the ovariectomies (also called oophorectomy) so often performed in the nineteenth century to cure “hysteria,” among other disorders, clitoridectomy had its supporters in Western medicine and was most often prescribed for masturbation. See, for example, Elizabeth Sheehan, “Victorian Clitoridectomy: Isaac Baker Brown and His Harmless Operative Procedure” in *The Gender/Sexuality Reader*, eds. R. N. Lancaster and M. di Leonardo (New York: Routledge Press, 1997), 325-334; G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Deborah Kuhn McGregor, *From Midwives to Medicine: The Birth of American Gynecology* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

⁴²⁹ Reilly, 29, 38.

⁴³⁰ For example, while Puerto Rico was under U.S. control, up to a third of its women were sterilized, some forcibly, during the twentieth century. See Annette B. Ramirez de Arellano and Conrad Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception: A History of Birth Control in Puerto Rico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Erica M. Gibson-Rosado, *The Sterilization of Women in Puerto Rico Under the Cloak of Colonial Policy: A Case Study on the Role of Perception in U.S. Foreign Policy and Population Control* (Washington: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Vanessa Bauza, “Puerto Rico: The Covert Campaign to Sterilize Women” *MS*, 5:2 (September/October 1994): 14; Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); and Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

again, many involuntary—were recommended and performed in a variety of contexts in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is little wonder, then, that Lydston's recommendation of castration as an alternative to lynching received so much discussion among scientists.

Indeed, the impact of Lydston's open letter to McGuire was immediate and long-lasting. Soon after the McGuire- Lydston correspondence was published, Daniel, a vocal critic of both racial and moral degeneracy, enthusiastically endorsed Lydston's surgical solution in "Should Insane Criminals or Sexual Perverts be Permitted to Procreate?," a paper he read before the Joint Session of the World's Columbian Auxiliary Congress Section on Medical Jurisprudence, the International Medico-Legal Congress, and the American Medico-Legal Society, New York, in 1893.⁴³¹ "[Lydston] would castrate the rapist, thus rendering him incapable of a repetition of the offense, and of propagating his kind, and turn him loose—on the principle of the singed rat—to be a warning to others." Daniel continued, "Dr. Lydston says, and very truly, that a hanging or even a burning is soon forgotten; but a negro buck at large amongst the ewes of his flock, minus the elements of his manhood, would be a standing terror to those of similar propensities."⁴³² In addition to being a mainstay on the scientific lecture circuit in 1893, Daniel also published the paper, under the title "Castration of Sexual Perverts," that same year in the Medico-Legal Journal and the Psychological Bulletin, as well as the Texas Medical Journal, of which he was the "Editor, Publisher, and Proprietor." As with the McGuire-

⁴³¹ F.E. Daniel, "Castration of Sexual Perverts" [Originally titled "Should Insane Criminals or Sexual Perverts be Permitted to Procreate"] Texas Medical Journal, 27:10 (April 1912): 369. Daniel's 1893 article was reprinted in the TMJ in 1912; my page numbers herein correspond to the 1912 reprint.

⁴³² Daniel, "Castration of Sexual Perverts," 378.

Lydston correspondence, Daniel's work had appeal for and reached a national audience; his publications and lectures were not limited to the South.

Concerned with justice rather than vengeance, Daniel argued that civilized society demanded the calm rationality of the informed scientist working in conjunction with the legal establishment. "The aim of jurisprudence should be, in addition to the repression of crime, a removal of the causes that lead to it, and reform, rather than the extermination of the vicious," he observed. Daniel, like many of his scientific contemporaries, believed that criminality was inborn and hereditary. Thus, "the offender should be rendered incapable of a repetition of the offense, and the propagation of his kind should be inhibited in the interest of civilization and the well-being of future generations." Referencing Henry Smith's recent lynching, he added, "these ends are not fulfilled by hanging, electrocution, or burning at the stake."⁴³³

For Daniel, castration would be "prophylactic and protective, both to society and to posterity." It would protect (white) women from the immediate threat of rape, and the (white) race from the threat posed by criminal sexual behavior being passed on to future generations, or degenerating the white race through miscegenation. That is, castration had the added eugenic benefit of "race improvement."⁴³⁴ Daniel argued that not nearly enough was being done to address sexual crimes, and ruefully pondered: "Is it not a remarkable civilization that will break a criminal's neck, but will respect his testicles?"⁴³⁵ However, when it came to black men lynch mobs were all too willing to break their necks and emasculate them. Clearly considering his article a classic, Daniel

⁴³³ Daniel, "Castration of Sexual Perverts," 376.

⁴³⁴ Daniel, "Castration of Sexual Perverts," 378.

⁴³⁵ Daniel, "Castration of Sexual Perverts," 380.

reprinted it again in the Texas Medical Journal in 1912.⁴³⁶ He also returned to the issues of rape, lynching, and castration in at least two additional articles, “The Cause and Prevention of Rape” (1904) and “Elements of Decay in American Civilization” (1909), published in the Texas Medical Journal.⁴³⁷

While none were as prolific as Lydston and Daniel, other scientists—most of them physicians—also weighed in on castration’s potential as a remedy for both black rape and lynching.⁴³⁸ The scientists who followed them all took as a given that the rape of white women by black men was an ever-growing threat that needed to be addressed immediately. In so doing, they employed the same racist language as Lydston and similarly attributed the black men’s sexual aggression to his biology. P.C. Remondino (1846-1926), a San Diego physician and publisher of the National Popular Review, is a case in point.⁴³⁹

Remondino reinforced the popular stereotype that black men had overly large penises. Moreover, from childhood on, black males were “more subject to nervous disorders than girls”; like women they were emotional, passionate, and irrational. This unfortunate combination—hypermasculine bodies with the weak minds of women—

⁴³⁶ Daniel, “Castration of Sexual Perverts,” 369.

⁴³⁷ F.E. Daniel, “The Cause and Prevention of Rape” Texas Medical Journal, 19 (May 1904): 452-462; F.E. Daniel, “Elements of Decay in American Civilization” Texas Medical Journal, 25 (July 1909): 1-9. Daniel’s views on black men’s poor character and sexual aggression changed little between “Castration of Sexual Perverts” (1893) and these two later articles, though he did qualify the specifics of his support for castration in these later articles. In 1904’s “The Cause and Prevention of Rape,” he argued that castration should be reserved for lesser sexual offenses like attempted rape and masturbation, whereas rape (in which penetration had occurred) and/or murder should be punished by—presumably legal—execution.

⁴³⁸ Lydston, too, returned to the “castration or lynching” question in several other publications, discussed later in the chapter.

⁴³⁹ “San Diego Biographies—Peter Charles Remondino” San Diego Historical Society <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/bio/remondino/remondino.htm>.

made them particularly susceptible to rape, Remondino maintained.⁴⁴⁰ He was convinced that the foreskin of the penis and its secretions could often prove “irritating” or “stimulating,” resulting in an “over-exuberant and impatient virility,” a problem that was exacerbated in the overly endowed black man. He characterized African Americans as “a race proverbial for the leathery consistency, inordinate redundancy, generous sebaceousness and general mental suggestiveness and hypnotizing influence of an unnecessary and rape, murder and lynching breeding prepuce.”⁴⁴¹ In Remondino’s web of logic, the blame for lynching could be placed not on the mob, but on the black man’s foreskin. He did not condone lynching, however. On the contrary, the mob response to America’s race problem was “not at all creditable to us” or in keeping with “civilized nations.”⁴⁴²

That Remondino and other turn-of-the-century scientists characterized lynching as contrary to “civilized nations” was due in large part to the efforts of anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells in the early 1890s. According to historian Gail Bederman, Wells “brilliantly and subversively manipulated dominant middle-class ideas about race, manhood, and civilization in order to force white Americans to address lynching...Wells, in short, convinced nervous white Northerners that they needed to take lynch law seriously because it imperiled both American civilization and American manhood.”⁴⁴³ Her impact extended outside the North, however. Between 1892 and 1894, Wells lectured across the United States and Britain, making it increasingly unfashionable for public

⁴⁴⁰ P.C. Remondino, “Questions of the Day: Negro Rapes and Their Social Problems,” National Popular Review: A Journal of Preventative Medicine and Applied Sociology, IV:1 (January 1894): 4.

⁴⁴¹ Remondino, 3.

⁴⁴² Remondino, 5.

⁴⁴³ Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 46.

figures on either side of the Mason-Dixon line to condone lynching. American discourse on “‘civilization’ positioned African American men as the antithesis of both the white man and civilization itself.”⁴⁴⁴ But in her editorials, pamphlets, and lectures, Wells masterfully inverted civilization discourse by arguing that it was the white members of the lynch mob who were the savages. In her speaking tours of the British Isles in 1893 and 1894, she put the “white man’s civilization on trial,” indicting the United States as a whole for allowing such barbarism as lynching.⁴⁴⁵

In this context, even the most virulently anti-black scientists were faced with increased pressure to condemn lynching publicly. Scientific authority hinged on the scientists’ status as rational and civilized. But even as growing numbers of Americans were condemning lynching between the 1890s and the first decades of the twentieth century, the “black beast rapist” trope maintained widespread acceptance among white Americans. This gave scientists the space to offer a medical solution to both social ills—black rape and its frequent result, lynching. Remondino, for example, stated that the surgeon’s knife would be more “humane” than the “many burnings, hangings, shooting and stonings that have of late taken place.” The actions of the lynch mob were “rather more in keeping with thought and actions that prevailed before the revival of Medicine,” he added. Lynch mobs were unnecessary when a far greater authority on racial matters existed—the physician and scientist.⁴⁴⁶

Scientists’ own words often revealed that their primary objections to lynching were not moral. Like Lydston and Daniel, Remondino questioned lynching’s

⁴⁴⁴ Bederman, 49.

⁴⁴⁵ For more on Wells’ speaking tours of England and Scotland, see Bederman, 45-75; and Mia Bay, To Tell the Truth Freely (forthcoming), Chapters 4 and 5.

⁴⁴⁶ Remondino, 3-4.

effectiveness as a deterrent. Indeed, medical intervention instead was needed to control black male sexuality, but Remondino insisted that circumcision offered a better solution than castration. Castration only addressed individual criminals, after they had already destroyed the lives of their victims, Remondino pointed out. But circumcision was a true preventative measure because it would prevent rape rather than recidivism. Moreover, because Remondino and other scientists believed that all black males were potential rapists by the nature of their biology, mandated circumcision would reach black men as a whole. In a very backhanded compliment, he pointed to the low incidence of rape among Jewish men to reinforce his claim that circumcision could serve as a preventative.

“Although the male Jews are much given to unholy and unedifying carnal pursuits,” he noted, “we never hear of a Jewish rapist.”⁴⁴⁷ Thus Remondino felt “fully warranted in suggesting the wholesale circumcision of the negro as an efficient remedy in preventing the predisposition to discriminate raping so inherent in that race.”⁴⁴⁸

Remondino’s recommendation of circumcision for all black men received a warm reception in several medical journals, at a time when the growing numbers of physicians advocated the procedure more generally for similar reasons of sexual purity and control.⁴⁴⁹ The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal favorably reported in February 1894

⁴⁴⁷ Remondino, 4.

⁴⁴⁸ Remondino, 3.

⁴⁴⁹ Notably, Lydston himself was an outspoken advocate for circumcising all male infants, arguing that circumcision was hygienic, healthful, and would diminish the risk of masturbation. Lydston was in good company at the turn of the century in touting the benefits of circumcision, tying it to both sexual and social hygiene goals. The actual rate of circumcision increased steadily throughout the late nineteenth centuries, from approximately fifteen percent in the 1890s to over forty percent in the 1920s, according to Edward Wallerstein, Circumcision: An American Health Fallacy (New York: Springer Publishing Co, 1980), one of the only sources that contains historical data on circumcision rates. Ironically, in contrast to Remondino’s proposed targeting of black men in particular, circumcision in practice became a marker of class status and whiteness. “Learning of its advantages in the privacy of their physicians’ office, Americans found circumcision appealing not merely on medical grounds, but also for its connotations of science, health, and cleanliness—newly important class distinctions,” David Gollaher writes in Circumcision: A

that circumcision would be an “efficient and gentle means of stopping the sexual crimes and improving the moral system of the negro race.”⁴⁵⁰ The same month, an editorial in the Maryland Medical Journal concurred that unlike universal black circumcision, “legal castration,” which so many had endorsed as a remedy for black rape, could not reach a large enough number of cases and could not be “enforced with any degree of justice or humanity that would prove practical or efficient.”⁴⁵¹

Meanwhile, one supporter of Lydston’s castration proposal came from a most unlikely and unusual source—a black man who had served with the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War. But then, as demonstrated earlier, there was nothing usual about William Hannibal Thomas. Of mixed-raced heritage, by the turn of the century the preacher, journalist, and legislator had transformed himself from an optimistic black leader into one of the most virulently anti-black voices in America. And in 1895, he attempted to put the “castration remedy” discussed by white scientists into action. Thomas drafted a congressional bill, “An Act to prevent and punish Criminal Assaults on Female Chastity, and other Felonious Acts.” The bill aimed to stem the rising tide of lynching by addressing what Thomas saw as its cause—the rape of white women by black men.⁴⁵² Simultaneously condemning lynching and blaming southern freedmen for their own deaths, he argued that the growing incidence of sexual assaults by black men in

History of the World’s Most Controversial Surgery (New York: Perseus Books, 2000, 106). Facing enormous an enormous influx of new inhabitants, “So it came about that the foreskin, viewed as dangerous by the medical profession, commonly came to indicate ignorance, neglect, and poverty. As white middle-class Gentiles adopted circumcision, those left behind were recent immigrants, people of color, the poor, and other at the margins of respectable society” (108).

⁴⁵⁰ “The Solution of the Negro Rape Problem,” Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, 130 (February 1, 1894): 126.

⁴⁵¹ “Circumcision for the Correction of Sexual Crimes Among the Negro Race,” Maryland Medical Journal, (February 10, 1894): 345.

⁴⁵² John David Smith, Black Judas: William Hannibal Thomas and The American Negro (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 157.

the South threatened “the character of our civilization” because they inspired extralegal violence by whites in response. Therefore, he proposed that men convicted of rape or attempted rape be castrated by “Executive Surgical Bailiffs,” “to deter others from committing like crimes, and to remove all incitement to lawlessness consequent thereon.”⁴⁵³

Thomas’ biographer John David Smith characterizes his “proposal to punish both rapists and lynch mobs” as “one of the most unusual approaches of his day for solving the South’s race problem.”⁴⁵⁴ But as we have seen, by 1895 the idea that castration might remedy both black rape and its attendant result—lynching—was not unusual at all in scientific circles. While Thomas was unable to find a congressional sponsor for the bill, one wonders whether the congressmen he approached objected to his proposal regarding castration or his insistence on holding lynch mobs accountable for their violent response. Despite the bill’s failure, Thomas did not abandon his belief that castration could ameliorate the “negro problem.”

Thomas returned to the idea in his 1901 publication, The American Negro: What He Was, What He Is, and What He May Become, proposing that any male over the age of fifteen who was convicted “by due process of law” of sexual assault (or attempted sexual assault) be castrated.⁴⁵⁵ Like the white scientists before him, Thomas argued that castration had “deterrent features, as well as punitive functions,” while also protecting the rights of the accused and preventing “lawless usurpation of authority.” Without referencing white scientists by name, Thomas used almost identical language as Lydston

⁴⁵³ Quoted in Smith, 157.

⁴⁵⁴ Smith, 158-159.

⁴⁵⁵ William Hannibal Thomas, The American Negro: What He Was, What He Is, and What He May Become (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1901), 234.

and Daniel in hailing castration's preventative benefits: "Our knowledge of negro nature convinces us that one living example of judicial emasculation would be worth, as a deterrent object-lesson to the race, a thousand summary executions of appalling barbarity."⁴⁵⁶

However, in other regards, the often conflicting and conflicted Thomas echoed black critics of lynching. Strongly condemning lynch violence, he insisted that the government had a duty to protect all of its citizens and to uphold law and order within the United States.⁴⁵⁷ Although Thomas did not cast doubt on the guilt of black men lynched for alleged sexual assaults, he nonetheless followed Ida B. Wells' lead in pointing out that not all lynchings of African Americans involved even an accusation of rape. Still, sentiments such as these were overshadowed by Thomas' scathing indictment of black character. Reinforcing the claims of white supremacist politicians and scientists, he stated, "The negro is of a preeminently sensual race, and one whose male members have an inordinate craving for carnal knowledge of white women."⁴⁵⁸ He attributed the problem to both environment and heredity, but pointed the finger at southern whites for setting such a poor example of civilized behavior. Black people were, after all, "imitators pure and simple, and inevitably adopt the manners of those around them." But ultimately,

⁴⁵⁶ Thomas, 236. As discussed earlier, Lydston stated in 1893, "A few emasculated negroes scattered around through the thickly-settled negro communities of the South would really prove the conservation of energy, as far as the repression of sexual crimes is concerned." Meanwhile, in his paper, "Should Insane Criminals Be Allowed to Procreate," published later the same year, F.E. Daniel voiced his support of Lydston's proposition as follows: "Dr. Lydston says, and very truly, that a hanging or even a burning is soon forgotten; but a negro buck at large amongst the ewes of his flock, minus the elements of his manhood, would be a standing terror to those of similar propensities."

⁴⁵⁷ Thomas, 230-233.

⁴⁵⁸ Thomas, 223.

he decided, “lynching will stop when [blacks] cease to commit heinous crimes, and when the freed men and women...set a higher estimate on morality and chastity.”⁴⁵⁹

One vocal white supremacist, R.W. Shufeldt, found Thomas’ assessment of the “negro problem” very compelling, though he disagreed that castration offered the solution. Shufeldt quoted at length from The American Negro in his own published attacks on black America. Devoting a full chapter to lynch law in both The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization (1907) and America’s Greatest Problem: the Negro (1915), he argued that only Anglo-Saxons could properly be termed “man.”⁴⁶⁰ Citing Thomas as an authority, Shufeldt characterized black people as “purely animal,” without morals or restraint. They sought sex for pleasure, not posterity, he maintained, and civilization was meaningless to them.⁴⁶¹

Although Shufeldt praised Thomas as an otherwise “keen and thoughtful observer,” he rejected Thomas’ castration proposal as “too puerile to be worth of sober consideration” and “simply idiotic and impossible.” It was only good in theory. “It would doubtless be a righteous thing,” he posited, “if it could be done, to emasculate the entire negro race in this country and effectually stop the breed right now, thus prevent any further danger from them and their crossing continually with the Anglo-Saxon stock.”⁴⁶² But as a punishment for rape, castration simply did not go far enough: “No, when a respectable white woman, in any plane of society, has been brutally assaulted and outraged by a negro, it will be of little satisfaction to her, or to any of her relatives, to

⁴⁵⁹ Smith, 226-228.

⁴⁶⁰ The latter reprinted large portions of the earlier text under new chapter titles, with some additional text and illustrations, and as we will see, some noteworthy revisions.

⁴⁶¹ R.W. Shufeldt, The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization (Boston: Richard G. Badger/The Gotham Press, 1907), 62. With a few minor changes in language, he repeated the same thing in America’s Greatest Problem (1915), 145-147.

know that the brutal raper had simply been carefully and kindly operated upon by a surgeon.” For the potential white rape victim and presumably for Shufeldt himself, the most galling part of Thomas’ castration “scheme,” was “the fact that the bestial creature lives after he has accomplished the crime.”⁴⁶³ He offered a brief and truly perfunctory condemnation of lynching, to which he was “of course, morally opposed,” but Shufeldt’s indignation that the “brutal raper” might live after his “kind” operation makes his objection to lynching seem hollow.⁴⁶⁴

Shufeldt’s “moral opposition” to lynching is further called into question by an anecdote he described in The Negro (1907). Therein, he recounted his own participation in a near lynching in Washington, D.C., after a “great burly black negro” allegedly accosted the twelve-year-old daughter of a military officer with whom Shufeldt was acquainted. The man was discovered by several witnesses who were alerted by the child’s screams, but he escaped amidst the ensuing commotion. Shufeldt recalled, “With the father, I hunted for that negro until long after dark, both of us being armed with revolvers. The father undoubtedly would have shot him on sight, as he frequently so expressed himself, while, for my part, I undoubtedly would have halted him and allowed the people to take him.” Presumably, “the people” referred to the lynch mob, but the “would-be raper” was never found.⁴⁶⁵ Shufeldt’s story underwent a rather noteworthy revision in his 1915 tome, America’s Greatest Problem. Describing the same incident, Shufeldt underplayed the extent of his own involvement. There, he simply stated, “The father and I hunted for that negro until long after dark, and he would, undoubtedly, have

⁴⁶² Shufeldt, The Negro, 65; Shufeldt, America’s Greatest Problem, 157.

⁴⁶³ Shufeldt, America’s Greatest Problem, 157-158.

⁴⁶⁴ Shufeldt, America’s Greatest Problem, 156.

⁴⁶⁵ Shufeldt, The Negro, 66.

been shot on sight. The would-be raper was never discovered in this case.”⁴⁶⁶ Between the publication of the two books, it was becoming increasingly unpopular to defend lynching outright, due in large part to the onslaught of publicity generated by anti-lynching activists.

Inhabiting a blurry middle ground between science and lynch mob, Shufeldt is also noteworthy for demonstrating how the same racist logic could lead to different conclusions. A dissenting voice among white scientists who addressed lynching, Shufeldt argued that it was precisely because black men’s impulse to rape white women was rooted in their biology, innate and unchangeable that castration would not work. For Shufeldt, black men’s embodied threat was as self-evident as it was pervasive. Shufeldt’s text, The Negro, contained a series of photos of Henry Smith’s lynching in Paris, Texas. In the chapter on lynch violence in America’s Greatest Problem eight years later, however, Shufeldt replaced the pictures of Smith’s lynching with two photos of an unnamed, nude black man. Neither of the two new photos is referenced in the body of the text and the captions simply read “Profile” and “Photo from life by the author. Note the prognathous jaws, the length of the arms, and the comparatively slight development of the gluteal region.”⁴⁶⁷ Non-sexual body parts like jaws and arms indicated the black man’s threatening nature as well. Notably, there is nothing to indicate that the unidentified subject had ever been accused of any crime. For Shufeldt, it did not seem to matter. Any black male body could demonstrate an ever-present potential as a sexual threat. He need only point out a few important features, the language and implications of

⁴⁶⁶ Shufeldt, America’s Greatest Problem, 150.

⁴⁶⁷ R.W. Shufeldt, America’s Greatest Problem: The Negro (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915), 152 and 160. The captions also indicate that the same subject was used in both photos, as well as a front-view headshot

which would have been familiar to a scientific audience or the lay reader who had made it through Shufeldt's earlier chapter on "the ethnological status of the negro."

"Prognathous jaws" and long arms had been invoked by ethnologists for decades as indicative of the black race's proximity to animals, an important allusion for Shufeldt, who was arguing that black men were hypersexual beasts.

As a consequence of their deviant bodies and brains, black men were driven by deviant biological imperatives. Shufeldt asserted that these impulses were so strong, so instinctive that nothing could make black men overcome them—not even the immediate threat of castration. In a rather bizarre claim even by Shufeldt's standards, he stated, "With the surgeon's knife actually pressing upon his scrotum; with the blazing fagots so near him that he could actually feel the heat of their flames, he would nevertheless seize his victim and outrage her if it lay within his power to do so."⁴⁶⁸ Using examples from the animal kingdom, Shufeldt added that castration, even when properly performed, rendered a male sterile but not necessarily impotent. Moreover, sexual aggression did not necessarily require genital function and the negro's "brutish passion" and amoral character lay at the very core of his being. No surgeon could "change the leopard's spots," Shufeldt insisted.⁴⁶⁹

In contrast, Lydston remained adamant that castration would make black men "docile, quite, and inoffensive," as he stated in "Castration Instead of Lynching" in the Atlanta Journal-Record of Medicine (1906).⁴⁷⁰ Lydston often noted that white men were

from the previous chapter. All three photos were reprinted from his Studies of the Human Form: For Artists, Sculptors and Scientists (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1908).

⁴⁶⁸ Shufeldt, The Negro, 75.

⁴⁶⁹ Shufeldt, America's Greatest Problem, 151; The Negro, 68.

⁴⁷⁰ Quoted in John S. Haller, Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 57.

hardly immune to rape themselves. If anything, he repeatedly remarked, white rapists were even more contemptuous because, as a race, whites were intelligent enough to know better. Whereas white sexual crimes were generally a product of poor character, black offenders were driven by defective biology and environmental conditions beyond their control.⁴⁷¹

The scientists who endorsed Lydston's surgical remedy for rape had largely adopted his model of black biological inferiority while generally ignoring his more reasoned calls for color-blindness in responding to sexual criminals—much to Lydston's frustration. "It is my opinion there is but one logical method of dealing with the rapist, and that is the total ablation of the sexual organs," Lydston repeated in his 1904 opus, Diseases of Society: The Vice and Crime Problem. But, he reminded his readers, "to be effectual, asexualization should be enforced against rapists of whatever color. Unjust discrimination against the blacks merely serves to defeat the purpose of the method."⁴⁷² The point still apparently lost on other scientists, Lydston was even more emphatic in 1912 in Sex Mutilations as a Remedy for Social Ills: "THERE SHOULD NOT BE ONE LAW FOR THE BLACK AND ANOTHER FOR THE WHITE."⁴⁷³

By far the most progressive among the scientists in the "castration or lynching" debate, Lydston consistently emphasized rational and humane treatment of criminals and "degenerates." He thus challenges historians, particularly historians of science and medicine, to think of "progressive" as an entirely relative term. In addition to his

⁴⁷¹ See for example, G. Frank Lydston, Diseases of Society: The Vice and Crime Problem (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1904), 421-426.

⁴⁷² Lydston, Diseases of Society, 424.

⁴⁷³ G. Frank Lydston, "Sex Mutilations as a Remedy for Social Ills: With Some of the Difficulties in the Way of the Practical Application of Eugenics to the Human Race," printed as a booklet for the New York

continued calls for castration, for example, Lydston recommended “a hermetically sealed apartment with a secret pipe for the admission of deadly gas” for repeat murderers and death by chloroform for the “driveling imbecile.” “The social cancer should be removed by the social surgeon—in effect, the executioner—quietly, humanely, and unexpectedly,” he remarked.⁴⁷⁴ By today’s standards, most of Lydston’s proposed treatments for society’s ills seem anything but progressive or humane. But compared to the torture meted out by lynch mobs during the same period—or perhaps even Shufeldt’s assertion that the solution to the “negro problem” was to colonize all African Americans somewhere, anywhere, outside U.S. borders where they would inevitably die out—surgery under anesthesia could indeed be a more “humane” option. More importantly, Lydston saw himself as progressive and was optimistic about science’s potential to reform society. For Lydston and many of his peers, “the medical doctor” was “the best social doctor.”⁴⁷⁵

“Dealt with in a Peculiar Manner”: Lynching and Castration on the Ground

Scientists were not speaking in isolation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were proposing solutions to social issues while race relations on the ground were influenced by and reflected scientific discourse. As scientists debated the effectiveness of lynching versus castration, countless newspapers and eyewitnesses reported on the character of racial violence in the streets. Rather than describing a “surgical operation” performed on hypothetical subjects, these stories recounted in often grisly detail the suffering endured by living human beings, including many men who lost

Academy of Medicine (October 27, 1917), first published in New York Medical Journal (April 6, 1912), 7. Capitalization is Lydston’s.

⁴⁷⁴ Lydston, Sex Mutilation as a Remedy for Social Ills, 22-23.

their lives as well as their sexual organs. A 1917 article entitled “Boy Unsexes Negro Before Mob Lynches Him,” published in the black newspaper The Chicago Defender, offers a revealing and tragic example. The incident took place in Houston, Texas, on October 12 of that year, at an oil-field where the victim, Bert Smith, was employed as a cook. Prior to his vicious murder, Smith had complained to the head of his camp about the sexual remarks and insulting behavior his mother and sister faced at the hands of several white workers when they came to visit him. Smith went so far as to identify the men responsible. A week after Smith made his complaint, three white men ambushed his sister as she walked home, bound, gagged, and raped her. They left her propped against a tree, where she was later found by several small boys. According to the article, one of the men approached Smith the following day, asking him, “Hey, nigger, did you see that ugly black wench they picked up in the woods yistidy?” then bragged about the details of the attack. In response, “Smith dealt this white a vicious blow that felled him.” Unfortunately for Smith, the incident was witnessed by several other oil drillers. Without hesitation, they descended upon him:

[The oil drillers] placed a rope around his neck, hammered his mouth in with a sledge and pierced his body with sharp instruments, and then forced a 10-year-old white lad who carried water around the camp to take a large butcher knife and unsex him. Smith, who was still alive, begged that all his feelings be taken from him. He was dragged down the main thoroughfare near the camp houses and viewed by citizens, including women.⁴⁷⁶

The young boy’s gruesome role in Smith’s lynching and the presence of women at the public display of the mutilated body represented a powerful and evocative indictment of white supremacy for the black paper, but neither was particularly unusual.

⁴⁷⁵ Lydston, Sex Mutilations as a Remedy for Social Ills, 1.

Spectacle lynchings often attracted a true cross-section of the community—cutting across lines of class, gender, and age—among the audience and active participants. White women were not simply passive victims whose image was invoked in lynching rhetoric. Rather, as historian Grace Elizabeth Hale notes, “White women often directed the very rituals by which white men recaptured their own masculinity through the castration of the black male. After all, the black man’s supersexual image was often the result of their testimony.” Some women were even given the “honor” of delivering the final, fatal blow.

⁴⁷⁷ And children of both sexes frequently collected twigs for the funeral pyre in which the terrified black victim would be burned alive. Male children were initiated into the world of white supremacy through their observation of or participation in lynchings. And reluctant young participants were sometimes goaded by older male relatives into physically maiming or taunting the lynching victim. In the Bert Smith case, the young white boy became a man by literally taking the manhood of an African American.

As was the case in many lynchings, the Bert Smith case ran counter to the standard narrative of lynching in contemporary racial science. Smith had not been accused—let alone convicted—of raping a white woman. Instead, he had protested the rape of his own sister at the hands of white men. And castration and lynching were not mutually exclusive in that oilfield in Houston. However, the Bert Smith lynching also demonstrates that scientific discourse on lynching and its enactment in the streets, as well as lynching’s representation in the popular media, intersected in important ways. For one, scientific and popular discussions of lynching employed the same gendered language and

⁴⁷⁶ Reprinted in Ralph Ginzburg, *100 Years of Lynching* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1962, 1996), 113-114.

⁴⁷⁷ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 234.

sexually charged racial tropes. Whether white scientists and concerned citizens condemned or condoned lynching, most invoked the standard image of black men as sexual threats, products of inferior biology, insufficient morals, or both. Second, the “castration or lynching” debate that raged in medical journals from the 1890s through the 1920s spilled over into newspapers and the mainstream press. Third, despite racial scientists’ discussions of castration and lynching as an “either/or” proposition, sexual mutilation became an increasingly central feature in the practice of lynching into the twentieth century. Moreover, lynching and castration served the same ideological and practical functions: intimidation, containment, and social control.

With these ends in mind, citizens and some members of the legal establishment weighed in on the “castration versus lynching” question in the popular press. However, while scientists like Lydston and Daniel saw castration as a progressive, therapeutic solution to the “negro problem,” many newspaper letters and editorials focused on castration’s punitive benefits. For example, an 1895 letter signed “Grandmother” to the Los Angeles Times declared punishment “altogether inadequate” for “those horrible crimes of outrage...that seem to be sweeping over our country.” “I am an old woman, and I have always thought imprisonment alone too light a punishment for such a crime,” she opined. But lynching was no solution either; “torturing the villains” was “a disgrace to the whole United States.” “Grandmother” argued that lynching was no extralegal substitute for capital punishment and its attendant torture was uncivilized and un-Christian. Her concern was not with the potential lynch victim, however, for “these

wretches are not men, and it is a disgrace to animals to call them beasts.” Her solution—castration—was the same as scientists writing during the decade.⁴⁷⁸

While “Grandmother” advocated castration as a suitably brutal punishment befitting “wretches [who] are not men,” others maintained that castration was more humane than lynching. Simeon Baldwin, a Connecticut Supreme Court judge and former governor, suggested in 1899 that castration would save face and lives. The surgical procedure would satisfy the desire of lynch mobs for retribution and America could avoid being characterized as “uncivilized,” an accusation increasingly lobbed by critics within and beyond the United States following Ida B. Wells’ anti-lynching campaign.⁴⁷⁹ Writing in The Atlantic Monthly in 1904, Clarence Poe of North Carolina also argued that the aim of castration was protection, but he focused on protecting society from sexual criminals rather than protecting black men from the lynch mob. Poe pointed to a recent Wilmington, Delaware, lynching of a black man who had already served time in prison for attempted assault before being accused of a second crime that resulted in his lynching. Had the “surgeon’s remedy” been employed, his next crime—and subsequent lynching—would have been prevented. “Set free with the same lustful mania, a wolf in human form, he brought death to himself and to a pure-hearted victim, and shame to a great state,” Poe wrote. He acknowledged that some may label “the proposed legal remedy” barbaric, but Poe insisted that the negro’s “peculiar crime” must “be dealt with in a peculiar manner.”⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Letters to the Times, “A Riverside Woman’s Plan of Salvation” Los Angeles Times (Nov. 20, 1895), 7. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴⁷⁹ Cited in Philip Dray, At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America (New York: Random House, 2002), 144.

⁴⁸⁰ Quoted in Dray, 144.

Not all newspaper letters and editorials supported castration as an alternative to lynching, however. Ex-Congressman William H. Fleming presented himself as a voice of reason in an “open letter” addressed “To the White People of Georgia.” Published on October 12, 1906, as “Race Problem Reviewed, Its Evils and Its Curses: A Diagnosis of the Rape Spirit and the Mob Spirit” in the Macon Weekly Telegraph and reprinted the following week in a South Carolina newspaper, the lengthy essay passionately condemned lynching. Like the numerous scientists who denounced lynching, Fleming did not reject the popular depiction of black men as a growing sexual threat. He posited, “The truth seems to be that these negro rapists are sexual degenerates whose will power is too weak to resist the force of their passions. Their moral perceptions are wholly perverted and their powers of self-control completely paralyzed.” But Fleming also characterized lynching as a social disease and employed medical metaphors to describe incidents of mob violence. He implored, “Only by making a correct diagnosis of those maladies [lynchings] can we succeed in prescribing effective remedies.”

For Fleming, castration was no remedy. He summarized and critiqued a series of letters that appeared in the Atlanta Georgian advocating the “procedure” for the problem of “negro rapists.” These letters shared “Grandmother’s” desire for swift punishment, but they also hinted at the eugenic aims that inspired scientists to advocate castration as well as their emphasis on its preventative effects. The discussion began with an editorial by John Temple Graves, who reiterated the support of castration he first voiced in a speech in the North several years earlier. Graves’ editorial sparked a prolonged succession of responses from the Georgian’s readers, the first of which “commend[ed] the castration suggestion but insist[ed] it did not go far enough; that all male descendents of the rapist

should be diligently sought out and castrated also, since they might inherit the evil tendency from their father.” As Fleming recounted, the next letter concurred, but added that “what we needed most was not punishment but prevention;” thus the letter urged “as an additional precautionary measure, that all male negro children should be castrated before they were eight days old.” Another letter endorsed the previous ones, but insisted that hypersexuality and aggression was not limited to African-American men. “Negro girls had passions, and tempted white men and bore mulatto children,” Fleming reported, “and this writer then urged that the castration of negro boy babies should be supplemented by the spaying of negro girl babies within eight days after their birth.” For some, the only real solution to the “negro problem” was to unsex the entire race.

Fleming saw nothing progressive in such propositions. He lamented, “It is scarcely conceivable that such brutal sentiments could be entertained among civilized people by any one outside of an insane asylum. It is utterly incomprehensible to some of us how a great newspaper like the *Georgian*, edited by a brilliant Southerner and owned by a wealthy Northerner, could give publicity to such vile rot without a word of condemnation.” Rather than presenting a viable alternative to lynching, the castration proposals that Fleming described fueled the very mentality that underlay lynch violence. “The point of the matter is this,” Fleming declared:

If one of our leading papers publishes such letters treating negroes on a level with hogs, whose new-born babes are to be castrated and spayed and follows that up with noble authority for slaughtering all the tribe of the rapist, how can any one be surprised at the members of the mob for murdering a few of those being classed with hogs?⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸¹ William H. Fleming, “Race Problem Reviewed, Its Evils and Its Curses: A Diagnosis of the Rape Spirit and the Mob Spirit,” *Macon Weekly Telegraph/Macon Daily Telegraph* (October 12, 1906): 4. The article was later reprinted as “The South’s Race Troubles: Ex-Congressman Fleming of Georgia Issues and Open Letter to People of the South—A Calm Appeal—Criticizes Graves, Hoke Smith, and Dixon,” *The State*

While Fleming failed to challenge the trope of the black rapist, he nonetheless offered a rare moment of moral clarity among whites considering the question of castration by pointing out that human beings should not be treated like livestock.

The topic of castration was still making the pages of the Macon Weekly Telegraph a year later and as one letter therein described, a similar discussion was occurring in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as well. Rev. Dr. McCook of Philadelphia had advised “surgical amendment of the body” for the crime of sexual assault, a letter in the Macon Weekly Telegraph reported. Declaring McCook’s proposition as “worthy of the most serious consideration,” the Philadelphia Record noted that castration—for black men specifically—as a punishment for sexual assault was rooted in early criminal statutes and Pennsylvania’s Quaker tradition of judicial reform. Referencing a paper delivered by lawyer Benjamin Nead before the Bar Association, the Philadelphia Record noted that a black man convicted of raping “any woman or maid” would be executed “under the administration of the benign Quaker founder of Pennsylvania” and “for an attempted rape upon a white woman or maid the punishment was castration.” The Macon Weekly Telegraph reported, “The Record adds that ‘the very common occurrence of the offense in this corner of Pennsylvania, where there are large numbers of negroes, goes far to justify the wisdom of the colonial statutes.’” The Telegraph editors added, “So far as we have observed, the Philadelphia newspapers of both political parties in recent times have been more persistent than any others in urging this form of punishment, and now that they know that under the influence of the ‘benign’ William Penn a law providing such

[Columbia, SC] (October 21, 1906). <http://www.newsbank.com>. America’s Historical Newspapers Online, NewsBank/American Antiquarian Society, 2004.

punishment was actually put in force in the colony of Pennsylvania, they will doubtless urge it more strongly than ever.” However, the editors of the Macon Daily Telegraph maintained that while “certainly such a punishment would ‘fit the crime,’” death or life imprisonment with hard labor would be “more decent and civilized” than Pennsylvania’s medico-legal advocacy of castration.⁴⁸²

The debate in popular and scientific publications was not without consequence on the ground. On at least one occasion, the question of “castration or lynching” turned from words to deed. On October 6, 1899, the Fort Worth Morning Register reported that “a party of white men today castrated a negro named Jenkins at Anderson, S.C., for making indecent proposals and exposing his person in an indecent manner to a white girl.” Entitled “Cured One Negro,” the article added that “the negro was given the choice of being lynched or submitting to a surgical operation. He decided on the latter.” The article does not indicate whether any doctors were present for this “surgical operation” or if Jenkins received anything to dull the pain. Instead, the brief article concludes matter-of-factly: “After the operation he was carried to his home and told that as soon as he got well he must leave the place.”⁴⁸³ It is difficult to know how exceptional the incident was. As with lynching in general, racial violence was all too commonplace and not always reported. However, while white mobs often heeded the popular and scientific call for castration, for the most part the mobs did not treat “unsexing” as a substitute for death or limit the mutilation to black men accused of sexual crimes.

⁴⁸² “To Fit the Crime” Macon Weekly Telegraph/Macon Daily Telegraph (October 20, 1907), 4. <http://www.newsbank.com>. America’s Historical Newspapers Online, NewsBank/American Antiquarian Society, 2004.

⁴⁸³ “Cured One Negro: He Made Indecent Proposals to a White Girl in South Carolina” Fort Worth Morning Register 3:309 (October 6, 1899), 1. America’s Historical Newspapers Online, NewsBank/American Antiquarian Society, 2004.

Indeed, as scientists, judges, and grandmothers debated the merits of castration as a substitute for lynching, “unsexing” became an increasingly frequent part of the lynching ritual. The 1890s marked the peak of lynchings in the United States, with 118 African Americans killed in 1893 alone.⁴⁸⁴ The number of lynchings per year remained high between 1890 and 1918, dipping below 50 only once and reaching triple digits several times. While generally on the decline, the number of black lives lost at the hands of Judge Lynch remained in the double digits through much of the 1920s and ’30s, the height of Walter White’s anti-lynching work.⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, as historian Grace Elizabeth Hale notes, “Although after the peak decades of the 1890s the number of lynchings decreased even in the South, the cultural impact of the practice became more powerful. More people participated in, read about, saw pictures of, and collected souvenirs from lynchings even as fewer mob murders occurred.”⁴⁸⁶

More and more, castration took center stage in the spectacle lynchings that large numbers of people witnessed, participated in, or read about and the victims’ genitals were often among the souvenirs they collected. As previously noted, newspaper accounts of America’s first spectacle lynching in February 1893 did not report that Henry Smith had been castrated, so we cannot know for sure whether or not he was.⁴⁸⁷ However, in July of

⁴⁸⁴ Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 6-7. According to Zangrando’s data, in 1893 34 whites were lynched and 118 blacks, for a total of 152.

⁴⁸⁵ The total (black and white) number of lynchings annually dipped below 10 for the first time in 1932 (since 1882, the first year of Zangrando’s data), and stayed in the single digits from 1936 on.

⁴⁸⁶ Hale, 201.

⁴⁸⁷ Henry Smith’s lynching, anticipated for days as he was hunted down, was immediately reported across the country. By turns sympathetic to the victim or to the mob, newspaper accounts describe Smith’s torture in agonizing detail, but none indicate that castration was among the horrors inflicted upon him. See the following from *America’s Historical Newspapers Online* (NewsBank/the American Antiquarian Society, 2004, <http://www.newsbank.com>), “Met an Awful Fate: Little Myrtle Vance’s Murderer Burned at the Stake,” *The Daily Inter Ocean* [Chicago, Illinois] (February 2, 1893): 2; “Burned at the Stake,” *Albuquerque Democrat* (February 2, 1893): 1; “Burned at the Stake,” *Daily Charlotte Observer* (February

that same year, four months after Lydston suggested that “negro ravishers” be castrated instead of lynched, a black Memphis man, Lee Walker, was subjected to both for approaching two white women in their buggy, possibly to rob them or to beg for money.⁴⁸⁸ Physical emasculation featured prominently in accounts of other well-publicized lynchings as well, including Sam Hose in Newman, Georgia, in 1899 and Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas, in 1916. In both cases, members of the mob saved the victims’ genitals as post-mortem souvenirs.⁴⁸⁹ In 1922, three black men were castrated and lynched in Kirvin, Texas, for the murder of a seventeen-year-old white girl, even though the girl’s own father pointed the finger at a white neighbor, with whom he had long been feuding, and implored law enforcement to prevent the lynching of local African Americans for the crime.⁴⁹⁰

One of the most well-known—and certainly one of the most horrific—spectacle lynchings took place in 1934, in Marianna, Florida.⁴⁹¹ There, Claude Neal stood accused of murdering a white woman, Lola Cannidy, who had been his neighbor since childhood and with whom he had been engaged in a romantic relationship for months, possibly years. “Determined to secure the ‘inside’ of the Marianna affair, the NAACP employed a

2, 1893): 1; “At the Stake—Smith Was Roasted,” The Columbus Enquirer-Sun (February 2, 1893): 1; “Horror of Horrors,” Dallas Morning News (February 2, 1893): 1; and “Burned! Awful Revenge for a Most Horrible Crime,” The Knoxville Journal (February 2, 1893): 1. In addition, while spectacle lynchings—with their carnivalesque atmosphere, huge crowds, parading of the dead body and macabre souvenirs, and often advertisement of the event beforehand so many could attend—increased after 1893, Hale explains, “not all southern lynchings fit this new and evolving pattern. More often, small groups of white men hunted down and shot or hanged their African American victims after an argument over the year-end sharecroppers’ settle or to send a message to other timber or turpentine camp laborers not to demand any better. These lynchings in the night claimed many more victims than the open-air spectacles of torture that drew such large crowds (201).”

⁴⁸⁸ Dray, 93-94.

⁴⁸⁹ For more on Hose and Washington, see Hale, 209-222.

⁴⁹⁰ Dray, 268-269.

⁴⁹¹ For a detailed account of the Neal lynching and its aftermath, see James McGovern, Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). As Robert

young southern white man [Howard Kester] who is ‘right’ on the race question to go to Marianna and make an investigation before the situation cooled down,” Walter White explained in an appeal for funds to have the lengthy investigative report printed in its entirety and disseminated as part of the organization’s anti-lynching campaign.⁴⁹² In his report, Kester recounted a conversation he had with a member of the lynch mob who “described the lynching in all of its ghastliness, down to the minutest detail.” Kester was later able to corroborate the details through other interviews. “After taking the nigger to the woods about four mile from Greenwood, they cut off his penis. He was made to eat it. Then they cut off his testicles and made him eat them and say he liked it,” the unidentified man reported to a sickened Kester.⁴⁹³ According to Kester’s report, Neal was tortured for “ten to twelve hours” before being killed; and when his body was dragged behind a car to the Cannidy home, a “mob estimated to number somewhere between 3000 and 7000 from eleven southern states were excitedly waiting his arrival.” There, his dead body was repeatedly run over, stabbed by women, and pierced by small children waiting with sharpened sticks.⁴⁹⁴ A month after Neal’s death, the NAACP sent

Ingalls demonstrates, Florida was the “lynching capital” of America during this period; see Ingalls, Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa, 1882-1936 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

⁴⁹² Robert L. Zangrando, ed. Papers of the NAACP [microfilm]—Part 7, The Anti-Lynching Campaign, 1912-1955 (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1987), Series A: Anti-Lynching Investigative Files, Reel 4: 0631. At the time, White and the NAACP kept the name of their white informant a secret, for his own safety and the integrity of the investigation; the source was later revealed to be Howard Kester, a college professor, preacher, and activist committed to racial justice.

⁴⁹³ “The Marianna, Florida Lynching: A Report of an Investigation Made for the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, 69 Fifth Avenue, New York, by a White Southern College Professor into the killing of Claude Neal by a Mob on October 26, 1934,” page 3. Papers of the NAACP—Part 7, Series A, Reel 4: 0649. In the letter to Walter White accompanying his preliminary report, Kester recounted, “Last night I talked for one hour and forty minutes with a member of the mob which lynched Claude Neal...I was quite nauseated by the things which apparently gave this man the greatest delight to relate.” Papers of the NAACP, Part 7 Series A, Reel 4:0635.

⁴⁹⁴ “The Marianna, Florida Lynching,” 3-4. In their discussions of the Neal lynching, most historians have relied on and quoted heavily from Kester’s report; the lynch mob member’s description of Neal’s castration, in particular, has been quoted in numerous scholarly works, including Hale, Making Whiteness; Dray, At the Hands of Persons Unknown; McGovern, Anatomy of a Lynching; Dora Apel, Imagery of

copies of the investigative report to President Roosevelt and Attorney General Homer S. Cummings.⁴⁹⁵

Widely characterized by scholars as America's last spectacle lynching, Claude Neal's death in 1934 and the enormous publicity surrounding it marked a turning point for the practice of lynching. To be sure, extralegal execution of African Americans did not end, but the carnival-like atmosphere and enormous crowds that had accompanied many such deaths since the 1890s largely fell out of a favor, with occasional exceptions. As James McGovern explains:

The traditional practice [spectacle lynching] by this time had become repulsive to all but a small number of whites: the call to arms, the gathering of white men in the darkened courthouse square to give chase, the manhunt or seizure from jail, attribution of heroism and justice to those who avenged the community's good name, mutilation of the victim's body and display of his remains in a public spectacle, and the photographing of hanging corpses for the sake of remembrance.⁴⁹⁶

McGovern attributes several factors to this shift in lynching from public spectacle to more private, if still brutal, affairs. The tremendous publicity generated by the NAACP in response to Neal's horrific death shocked large numbers of white Americans out of complacency—or complicity—on the issue of lynching. The publicity surrounding the

Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Christopher Waldrep, Lynching in America: A History in Documents (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Mason Boyd Stokes, The Color of Sex: Whiteness, Heterosexuality, and the Fictions of White Supremacy (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Felipe Smith, American Body Politics: Race, Gender, and Black Literary Renaissance (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); and McKay Jenkins, The South in Black and White: Race, Sex, and Literature in the 1940s (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1999), among others.

⁴⁹⁵ NAACP memo, "Roosevelt and Cumming Get Gruesome Lynch Report," NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 4: 0666.

⁴⁹⁶ McGovern, 140. For a more extensive analysis of lynching's transformation in the 1930s, see Jessie Daniel Ames, The Changing Character of Lynching: Review of Lynching, 1931-1941 (Atlanta: Published by Commission on Interracial Cooperation Inc, 1942). The white founder and director of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, Ames sought to challenge the stereotype of white women as passive objects in need of protection, toward the goal of ending the lynchings so often committed in their name. For more on Ames, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie

Neal case as well as anti-lynching legislation before Congress generated more sympathy from the White House than ever before.⁴⁹⁷ The Neal lynching culminated nearly fifty years of community-sanctioned racial violence and represented the pinnacle of human brutality, but it was also that very excess that finally turned the tide of majority public opinion against lynching, at least in its most public form.⁴⁹⁸

Even after the character of lynch violence had changed and the number of victims decreased, castration still remained central to both the practice of lynching and its place in the American imaginary. In 1943, for example, two fourteen-year-old boys, Charlie Lang and Ernest Green, were lynched in Mississippi after being taken from the jail where they were being held for allegedly attempting to rape a thirteen-year old white girl. Though the sheriff said the two boys had confessed, an investigation by the NAACP later revealed that the three children often played together.⁴⁹⁹ The NAACP investigative report further noted that on the day of the alleged attempted rape, the boys “were running and jumping when the girl ran out from under the bridge and the boys behind her. A passing motorist saw them and the result you know.” The two boys were later strung up from the very bridge where they had played with their white friend. They were not simply hung, however. Lynch violence may have lost its cheering crowds by 1943, but it did not abandon the sexual mutilation of its victims, along with other ritualized tortures.

Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹⁷ McGovern, 139.

⁴⁹⁸ Historians have also pointed to a shift from spectacle lynchings to “legal lynchings” after the Neal case, whereby law enforcement officials used deadly force on black prisoners under the guise of escape attempts or other forms of resistance; see in particular, Steven Lawson, David Colburn, and Darryl Paulson, “Florida’s Little Scottsboro” in Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation, Community, and the Black Freedom Struggle (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003).

⁴⁹⁹ Charles Payne, I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 13-14.

According to the NAACP report, “The boys were mutilated...[and] their reproductive organs were cut off.”⁵⁰⁰

The possibility of castration also featured prominently in the mythology surrounding one of the most well-known lynchings in American history, that of Emmett Till in 1955. A fourteen-year-old boy from Chicago, Till had been sent to Mississippi that summer to visit relatives. Unaccustomed to the rigid lines governing race and sex in the South, the young boy allegedly whistled at a white woman, Carolyn Bryant, or by other accounts, simply looked at her the wrong way. It cost him his life. Taken from his relatives’ home, he was later found shot and beaten beyond recognition in the Tallahatchie River. Bryant’s husband and his half-brother were tried and acquitted for the crime, but soon afterward confessed their guilt to Look magazine.⁵⁰¹

Emmett’s mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, had his body sent back to Chicago where she insisted on viewing it at the morgue prior to making his funeral arrangements.⁵⁰² Till-Mobley poignantly described examining each part of his body, starting at his feet, to work up to the shock and finality of looking at his face. “I moved on up a little farther and stopped at his private area. Just long enough, really, to see that everything was still there...I was relieved for a moment before I caught myself. Oh, my God. Emmett would have a fit if he knew I was looking at him like this,” she recalled.⁵⁰³ Till-Mobley was

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted in Payne, 14.

⁵⁰¹ For more on the Till lynching, see for example Dray, 422-432; Hale, 289-292; Payne, 39-54; and Stephan Whitfield, A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till (New York: Free Press, 1988). Till’s mother also wrote an in-depth book about the lynching and its aftermath, published the year of her death in 2003; see Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America (New York: Random House, 2003).

⁵⁰² I use the name “Mamie Till-Mobley” somewhat anachronistically here because it the name by which she is most commonly known today. At the time of her son’s death, Mamie was married to her second husband and went by the last name Bradley. She later remarried and went by “Till-Mobley” until her death in 2003.

⁵⁰³ See Till-Mosely and Benson, 135; and George E. Curry, “The Death of Emmett Till: A Mother’s 40-Year Agony” Emerge: Black America’s Newsmagazine, (July/August 1995): 26.

adamant that her son be given an open casket funeral and allowed photos of his badly disfigured face to be printed in Jet magazine.⁵⁰⁴

Even more than the Neal lynching two decades earlier, the publicity surrounding Till's death—and the acquittal of the men responsible—mobilized African Americans and triggered a vocal outcry from many whites across the country. Not only did Till's young age and his grieving mother present a powerful and sympathetic image, the visceral coverage of his death was aided by the new and far more immediate medium of television. Despite the enormous publicity and the killers' confessions, the Till case remained shrouded in mystery. Notably, Till was widely reported to have been castrated and rumors to that effect have persisted to the present, even in the face of the autopsy report and his mother's testimony to the contrary.⁵⁰⁵ As we have seen, the assumption that Till lost his sex as well as his life was not without foundation, even if it turned out to be untrue in Till's case. Moreover, that so many assumed Till had been castrated—and that his mother immediately checked to see if he had—demonstrates how closely castration and lynching had become linked in the American cultural imaginary by the mid-twentieth century.

It is difficult if not impossible to know exactly how often castration was practiced as part of the lynching ritual. Not all lynchings were reported and even when they were, reporters were not always close enough to the front of the crowd (or interviewed witnesses who were) to report the particulars of the victim's torture, while other

⁵⁰⁴ For more on the racial and gender politics at play in Mamie Till-Mobley's shrewd publicity campaign in the wake of her son's death, see Ruth Feldstein, "'I wanted the whole world to see': Race, Gender, and Constructions of Motherhood in the Death of Emmett Till" in Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

newspaper accounts likely omitted sexual details or, as was often the case, cloaked them in euphemisms. However, as historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage points out, “the most relevant measure of the importance of [sexual] mutilation during lynchings for sex crimes was never the percentage of black victims who were mutilated, but rather the lasting impression that each incident left upon the observers.”⁵⁰⁶ While castration was also a part of lynchings in which the victims were not accused of sexual infractions, Brundage’s point is well-taken. A shocking detail in the most lurid of lynching accounts, one can only imagine the trauma experienced by African Americans who witnessed or read about such events. In her discussion of lynching, literary critic Trudier Harris observes, “This element [castration] in particular would capture the imagination of many generations of black writers who, in their works, made the elements surrounding the lynching of black men a ritual which would be repeated in literary works for more than a hundred years.”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ See, for example, Jerry Mitchell, “Re-examining Emmett Till case could help separate fact, fiction” *USA Today* http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-02-18-till-legends_x.htm; Curry, 26; and Till and Benson, 135.

⁵⁰⁶ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 66. Brundage argues that historians “should be cautious in assuming that the ritual [of castration] was a central, even defining, element of lynchings for rape...Extant evidence, admittedly open to question, suggests that mass mobs mutilated one in three black victims lynched for alleged sexual offenses in Georgia and one in ten blacks lynched in Virginia (66).” However, he does not elaborate on or cite this evidence and his focus on Georgia and Virginia presents challenges to generalizing on lynching throughout the country. For one, he focused primarily on the more covert, “under the cloak of darkness” lynchings than the more public spectacle lynchings in which torture, including castration, was an essential part of the spectacle. Also, he uses Virginia as a point of comparison with Georgia because of the former’s relatively low incidents of lynching. And of the cases I discuss here in which castration did feature prominently in the lynch ritual—and its reporting—only one occurred in Georgia, with two from Mississippi, one from Florida, one from Tennessee, and three from Texas. In addition, he focuses here only on lynchings for alleged sex crimes; in several of the cases I discuss in which the lynch victim was castrated, he had been charged with non-sexual offenses, such as robbery (Walker), or incurred the mob’s wrath for trying to prevent a rape rather than committing one himself (Burt Smith). Unlike Brundage, Philip Dray maintains, “For reasons of delicacy, direct allusions to castration were left out of most contemporary lynching accounts, the general term mutilation being substituted, but there can be little doubt that it was often the centerpiece of the entire lynching ritual” (82).

⁵⁰⁷ Trudier Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 5-6. The theme of castration—both figurative and literal—appears throughout Harris’ text.

Indeed, the specter of castration, as a painful and humiliating prelude to death, loomed large in the African-American imaginary and was a powerful part of the culture of fear lynching produced. But black contemporaries also often represented lynching as a symbolic emasculation. Acclaimed black writer Richard Wright, for example, described the sense of powerlessness black men felt at the hands of their white counterparts, a figurative unsexing that could at any moment be made material: “The white death hung over every black male in the South...I had already grown to feel that there existed men against whom I was powerless, men who could violate my life at will.”⁵⁰⁸

Furthermore, lynching and castration—whether prescribed as a medico-legal solution by “progressive” scientists or performed by a lynch mob—served the same function as a form of social control. Just as Lydston suggested that a “few castrated negroes” would serve as a powerful example to other potential rapists of his race, so too did lynching function not just to punish individual victims, but to keep an entire race from stepping out of line. Writing at the turn-of-the-century, journalist and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells often asserted that the threat black men represented to white society was not sexual, as so often portrayed, but political. Black men’s enfranchisement challenged white political, social, and economic dominance, hence the real reason for violence against black men. “‘The Negroes are getting too independent,’ they say, ‘we must teach them a lesson.’ What lesson? The lesson of subordination,” she wrote in her 1892 pamphlet, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases.”⁵⁰⁹ African Americans learned this lesson early and viscerally. As Richard Wright wrote in 1941, “Fear is with

⁵⁰⁸ Quoted in Richard Wormser, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003), 75.

⁵⁰⁹ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases,” reprinted in *Ida B. Wells-Barnett On Lynchings* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 19.

us always, in those areas where we black men equal or outnumber the whites fear is at its highest.”⁵¹⁰ In his book of photography and prose chronicling life under Jim Crow, 12 Million Black Voices, Wright linked lynching to both emasculation and attempts to thwart black progress. As he poignantly described, displays of pride or self-assertion by black men were often met with violence, and death was the price for a voice raised in protest.⁵¹¹

As with lynching, the threat of castration was not simply about emasculation, but about silencing all African Americans, made clear by a rather ironic response to Ida Wells’ critique of racial violence. On May 24, 1892, Wells, writing under a pseudonym, published a scathing editorial in her Memphis newspaper, The Free Speech, in which she challenged the “threadbare lie” that black men were driven to rape white women and suggested that the charge of rape so often associated with lynching might actually cloak consensual interracial sex.⁵¹² Immediately, a flurry of angry responses flooded Memphis newspapers. One response, published in The Evening Scimitar the next day, threatened the editorialist, whom most readers assumed to be male (a reasonable assumption at a time when journalism was overwhelmingly dominated by men), with castration if “he” did not recant. “If the negroes themselves do not apply the remedy without delay,” the letter warned, “it will be the duty of those whom he has attacked to tie the wretch who utters these calumnies to a stake at the intersection of Main and Madison Sts., brand him in the forehead with a hot iron and perform upon him surgical operation with a pair of tailor's shears.”⁵¹³ Here, castration also meant censorship.

⁵¹⁰ Richard Wright. 12 Million Black Voices (New York: Thunder Mouth’s Press, 1941), 46.

⁵¹¹ Wright, 88-89.

⁵¹² Barnett, “Southern Horrors,” 4.

⁵¹³ Wells-Barnett, “Southern Horrors,” 5.

In the aftermath of her editorial, the office of The Free Speech was burned to the ground and Wells was forced to leave Memphis, but she was not silenced. Instead, she continued to publish and speak on the issue of lynching. Historian August Meier remarks, “Mrs. Wells-Barnett rallied anti-lynching sentiment both at home and abroad, and almost single-handedly kept the issues alive. Later on, after World War I, the NAACP entered upon an intensive anti-lynching campaign, but at the turn of the century opposition to the vicious practice was essentially one and the same with the activities of Ida Wells-Barnett.”⁵¹⁴ Later in life, she worked—and sometimes clashed—with Walter White on that NAACP campaign against lynching and was active in black protest politics until her death in 1931. Despite the ever-present threat of violence and “castration,” both literal and figurative as a form of censorship, black activists like Wells and White continued to speak out, even after narrowly evading lynching themselves.

Scholars have attributed castration’s central place in the lynch ritual to numerous factors, including sexual jealousy amidst frequent claims that black men had larger genitalia and greater potency, anxieties over the changing meanings of white manhood, and reassertion of white patriarchal power in the face of black political, economic, and social advancement during Reconstruction. Others have pointed out that spectacle lynching, so often justified with rhetoric about the “black beast rapist,” was itself a sexual assault in which the lynch victim was publicly exposed, humiliated, and brutalized. And, as Philip Dray adds, “The act of castration, a horrifying component of many lynchings,

⁵¹⁴ August Meier, Introduction, Ida Wells-Barnett On Lynchings, iii.

was at least mechanically familiar to most Southern participants, men accustomed to the slaughter of fowl and livestock and such practices as the gelding of horses.”⁵¹⁵

To be sure, all of these factors likely played a role in castration’s prominence in the lynch ritual. But generally overlooked is that the scientific and popular press alike frequently featured suggestions that “negro ravishers” be either “treated” or “punished” with castration. While these editorials and scientific articles usually advocated castration instead of lynching, the volatile racist rhetoric they employed to justify the “surgical procedure” fueled the lynch law mentality and perhaps offered some mob members a tempting addition to their ritual of horrors. Lynch mobs read past the articles’ pleas to spare lives to their affirmation that black men were sexual threats in need of emasculation. Just as lynch mobs acted outside the legal establishment in executing their victims, so too did they perform physicians’ oft-suggested “surgical procedure” outside the scientific establishment.

“The influence of theories of racial superiority and inferiority”: Walter White, Scientific Racism, and the NAACP Anti-Lynching Campaign

While racial scientists presented themselves as offering a solution to lynching, Walter White saw them as part of the problem. On August 31, 1927, White (1893-1955), then Assistant Secretary of the NAACP, wrote a two-page letter of introduction to Dr. Raymond Pearl (1879-1940), a professor of biology at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. Pearl had critiqued eugenics, of which he had once been an outspoken proponent, in the popular periodical The American Mercury in November 1926. The publicity surrounding Pearl’s apparent change of heart likely inspired White to approach him as a potential ally in his campaign against lynching, to which he attributed scientific

⁵¹⁵ Dray, 81.

theories of black inferiority as a contributing factor. Introducing himself through their mutual friend, H.L. Mencken, White turned quickly to the purpose of his correspondence. He explained that he was writing a book on lynching in the United States, in which he was “attempting to treat lynching not only as an isolated phenomenon but also to fit it into its proper setting, which is made up of the social, economic, psychological and historical factors which cause this practice.” Among those factors, one stood out as particularly relevant for a scientist like Pearl, long interested in biology and race. “One of the most important causes [of lynching], it seems to me,” White noted, “is the theory or doctrine of inherent racial inferiority which serves some lynchers to feel they have not committed as grave an offense in killing a Negro as would be the case in putting a white man to death.” If scientific racism was a contributing factor in lynching, then debunking its central claims was critical to combating racial violence, and White enlisted Pearl’s help in doing so. “I hope you will not too seriously object to my drawing upon your knowledge in this fashion,” he remarked, before barraging Pearl with erudite questions relating to racial science.⁵¹⁶

Walter White confronted racial science at a transitional moment in its history. As Mia Bay notes, “The early decades of [the twentieth] century ushered in the slow demise of scientific racism in the American academy. Led by a German-born anthropologist named Franz Boas, turn-of-the-century scientists investigated the biological basis of race for the first time, initiating an inquiry that ultimately led to the conclusion that culture and environment—rather than racial characteristics—were the main arbiters of human

⁵¹⁶ Walter White to Raymond Pearl, 8/31/1927. Raymond Pearl Papers, American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA). Correspondence—Series 1, Box 21: NAACP Folder #1.

differences.” However, she adds, “This scientific revolution did not take place overnight.”⁵¹⁷

Indeed, biological paradigms of racial difference and hierarchy maintained a strong foothold in American science until after World War II, prompting frequent counter-challenges by black intellectuals like Walter White as well as sympathetic scientists. That “Mr. NAACP” could enlist a white scientist to assist his attack on racial science in the 1920s and 1930s exemplifies this period of flux, in which scientists could be both friend and foe to African Americans. In From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954, Lee Baker explains that Boas defined cultures as “particular to geographic areas, local histories, and traditions.” More revolutionary still, “one could not project a value of higher or lower on these cultures.” Boas’ cultural relativism eventually supplanted evolutionary frameworks of race among scientists, though stalwarts of biological determinism remained vocal in America. By the time White reached out to Pearl in the 1920s, then, the belief that racial differences were natural and immutable, which had been used to legitimize racial hierarchy for over a century, was under attack. As Baker points out, “Boas’s contributions were singularly significant, but he did not work alone. Without the wider social and political efforts of DuBois, the NAACP, and scholars at Howard University, Boas’s contributions to the changing signification of race would have been limited to the academy.”⁵¹⁸ Walter White saw his own challenges to scientific racism as relevant far beyond the Ivory Tower.

⁵¹⁷ Mia Bay, The White Image in the Black Mind: African-America Ideas About White People, 1830-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 187.

⁵¹⁸ Lee Baker, From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 100.

Scientific theories about racial difference and black inferiority played an important role in Walter White's public and private writings on lynching throughout his career with the NAACP. He maintained a professional and friendly relationship with Raymond Pearl for years, soliciting his advice on scientific matters and securing for Pearl a position on an NAACP-convened committee charged with investigating discrimination at a Harlem hospital, a committee that also included W.E.B. DuBois and Adam Clayton Powell. The two men and their spouses also occasionally socialized, though their lengthy correspondence seems to indicate more missed encounters and canceled visits than successful gatherings.⁵¹⁹ White's belief that the widespread acceptance of scientific theories of racial hierarchy enabled, even promoted, violence against black people figured prominently in his 1929 text Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch, an entire chapter of which was devoted to racial science.

Like Ida Wells before him, White frequently attacked the "thread-bare lie" that lynching was a response to the rape of white women by black men, addressing head-on the issues of sex that were pervasive in popular discourse on race. But by and large, when White discussed racial science in his public work, he focused on scientists' claims about black inferiority that were not explicitly about sex. That is, he often critiqued studies of brain weight, head size, and skull shape, for example, from which ethnologists extrapolated about intelligence, rather than medical writing on "furor sexualis" or the supposedly enlarged genitalia of black men and women, claims he never lent the authority of science by attributing them to physicians. In Rope and Faggot, for example,

⁵¹⁹ On Pearl's participation in the Harlem hospital investigative committee, see Correspondence—Series 1, Box 21: NAACP Folder #2 of the Raymond Pearl Papers, American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA). Professional and social meetings—missed and kept—between the two men are described in NAACP Folders 1-3.

White notes that “sex and alleged sex crimes have served as the great bulwark of the lyncher” and devotes a chapter to “Sex and Lynching.”⁵²⁰ Listing both “sex” and “scientific theories of racial superiority and inferiority” as among the “ingredients” of lynch violence, he approaches the two as separate discourses; “questions of sex” do not appear to have colored scientific considerations of race in White’s analysis.⁵²¹ His personal correspondence with Pearl indicates he was very much aware that popular ideas about black sexuality permeated scientific work on race, but for a number of reasons, he distanced them from racial science and instead associated them with a misguided public.

White was born in 1893 in Atlanta to a “happy middle class family.” Though his father’s salary as a postman was modest and the family’s resources stretched thin, White’s thrifty parents were able to provide a comfortable home for their seven children. George White’s work with the postal service also placed the family firmly within Atlanta’s thriving black middle class. He and his wife emphasized education and religion as integral parts of the family’s respectability and vital to the success of the black race as a whole.⁵²² Like his father, White attended Atlanta University, the prestigious black school founded after the Civil War by northern whites; an average student, he graduated in 1916.⁵²³ He went to work for the Standard Life Insurance Company, the largest black-owned business of the time, in the summer before his senior year of college and

⁵²⁰ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 55.

⁵²¹ White, *Rope and Faggot*, viii.

⁵²² Walter White was an incredibly complex figure and offers a fascinating lens into a number of historical issues—racial identity, passing, black activism in the first half of the 20th century, gender tensions within the NAACP, and interracial alliances and tensions, among others—many of which are outside the scope of my study here. For more on White’s life, see Walter White, *A Man Called White* (New York: Arno Press, 1969, 1948) and Kenneth Robert Janken, *Walter White, Mr. NAACP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Janken’s biography of White was originally published as *White: The Biography of Walter White, Mr. NAACP* (New York: New Press, 2003); all page numbers herein refer to the 2006 UNC Press edition.

⁵²³ Janken, 20.

continued with the company after graduation. The racism he witnessed as he combed the countryside for customers that first summer later prompted him to write to the national headquarters of the NAACP about starting a local branch in Atlanta. He received a response from James Weldon Johnson, who supported the idea, and White was soon elected secretary of the nascent Atlanta branch. Against Johnson's urging, however, White built a branch that saw only men in its executive and working committees, the first of many times White would run into conflicts with or regarding women in leadership positions in the organized civil rights movement.⁵²⁴

Gender was not the only source of conflict for White; so, too, were race and class. Some black activists viewed White as elitist and believed he manipulated his ability to pass as white for his own advantage. White noted that his parents "were both so light-skinned that either could have passed for white." White's own light skin would prove an asset to his involvement in the NAACP's anti-lynching campaign, even if it did occasionally earn him the suspicion of his African-American peers.⁵²⁵ White's appearance saved his life in 1906 and later enabled him to infiltrate the white South during his lynching investigations and gain an unprecedented insight into the mindset of the lynch mob. That is, White's racial passing was strategic and situational rather than permanent. As biographer Kenneth Robert Janken notes, "His appearance gave him the option—which he did not exercise—to pass for white, but it nonetheless stamped the way he looked at the world and the way the world looked at him."⁵²⁶ Moreover, "he used his anomalous condition to advantage," Janken explains:

⁵²⁴ Janken, 20-24. On White's conflicts with and treatment of women with the NAACP, see also 48-49.

⁵²⁵ White, 13-14.

⁵²⁶ Janken, 2.

His popular writings on his complexion and ‘passing’ exploded racial stereotypes and challenged the idea of race as an immutable category. At the same time, he exploited his position as a voluntary Negro; his exotic status paradoxically afforded him a social standing and a wealth of contacts that would have been denied him had he been white.

White’s ability to pass not only allowed him to investigate lynchings with “insider” access; it also proved a valuable tool in his lifelong fight to challenge racist assumptions and racial categories themselves.⁵²⁷

However, Walter White was always careful to assert that he did not wish to be white and that he identified with the struggles of his black brethren. Furthermore, in his sharp and innovative analyses of race, he also drew on a long tradition of black protest thought. Describing later in life his childhood racial awakening in the wake of the 1906 race riots, White repeatedly echoed the concerns and language of nineteenth-century black ethnologists. Like these predecessors, White both employed religious metaphors and bemoaned the fact that religion had been used to justify racial inequality. “It made no difference how intelligent or talented my millions of brothers and I were, or how virtuously we lived. A curse like that of Judas was upon us, a mark of degradation fashioned with heavenly authority,” he lamented. “There were white men who said Negroes had no souls, and who proved it by the Bible. Some of these now were approaching us, intent upon burning our house.”⁵²⁸ Likely shaped by his adult experiences and knowledge, his recollection of the traumatic boyhood incident reflected a familiarity with ethnological discourse.

⁵²⁷ Janken, xiii-xiv.

⁵²⁸ White, 11.

White also echoed black ethnologists in his gendered assessments of the black and white races, juxtaposing the “angry Saxon” with the “redeemer race.”⁵²⁹ Though he lamented the discrimination and violence blacks faced at the hands of whites, it made him all the more inclined to identify with the former, to fight alongside the oppressed rather than align himself with oppressor: “I was sick with loathing for the hatred which had flared before that night and come so close to making me a killer; but I was glad I was not one of those who hated; I was glad I was not one of those made sick and murderous by pride.” The white race was hypermasculine, aggressive, and power hungry; he did not wish to be “one of those whose story is in the history of the world, a record of bloodshed, rapine, and pillage.” He cast his lot instead with “the races that had not fully awakened,” who had the potential to “write a record of virtue” rather than a record of conquest.⁵³⁰

Toward that end, he accepted an invitation in 1918 to join the staff of the NAACP as Assistant Secretary under James Weldon Johnson, just as the organization was launching its anti-lynching campaign. With his ability to pass for white and his passionate critiques of racial violence, White was immediately put to work in the field investigating lynchings. With the encouragement of writer and social critic H.L. Mencken, whom he met in 1922, White wrote two novels, The Fire in the Flint (1924) and Flight (1926), which dealt with lynching and racial passing, respectively. Awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, he moved to France in 1926 to work on a third novel, but haunted by his work with the NAACP, he instead began writing Rope and Faggot, an analysis of the causes and character of lynching in the United States. It was during this

⁵²⁹ As discussed in Chapter One, black ethnologists often characterized the white race as hypermasculine, aggressive warmongers, and celebrated the black race’s “feminine” qualities---moral, spiritual, peaceful---tropes Mia Bay has termed the “Angry Saxon” and the “Redeemer Race” respectively.

⁵³⁰ White, 12.

period that White wrote to American biologist Raymond Pearl, enlisting his help with a chapter on scientific theories about race.

White's senior by fourteen years, Pearl was born in Farmington, New Hampshire, in 1879 and went on to receive an education typical for a driven Northern white man of comfortable means. Pearl obtained his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1899 and his PhD from the University of Michigan in 1902; he also spent time studying abroad at Leipzig and as a fellow in the Galton Laboratory at University College in London. He held a variety of lectureships in the United States and Europe, but spent the bulk of his professional life at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, where he built a career as a well-known and respected biologist, geneticist, and biometrician.⁵³¹ In Baltimore, he was also part of a lively circle of intellectuals who debated social issues. Pearl was an incredibly prolific scientist, penning or co-authoring 712 publications, 17 of which were books.⁵³² His research often funded by the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, Pearl served on the editorial boards of numerous scientific journals and as editor of the Quarterly Review of Biology and Human Biology.⁵³³ He published on topics ranging from animal husbandry to disease and longevity in human beings, but his work on eugenics, race, and population control was of particular interest among his contemporaries.

In The Retreat of Scientific Racism, historian Elazar Barkan states that Pearl's "views on eugenics and race are especially interesting because he aspired to correlate his

⁵³¹ According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the words "biometry" and "biometrician" could be traced to 1901; biometry is defined as "the statistical analysis of biological observations and phenomena."

⁵³² "Guide to the Major Collections of the American Philosophical Papers—Raymond Pearl Papers," American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA
<http://www.amphilsoc.org/library/guides/glass/pearl.html>.

biological research to social questions, to combine his role as an expert, the absolute savant, to that of the intellectual and leader of public opinion.”⁵³⁴ While this is certainly true of Pearl, the same could be said about most racial scientists from Josiah Nott in the antebellum era to Pearl’s contemporaries; the sciences of race, from ethnology to eugenics, were fundamentally applied science. Pearl was unique, however, in the enormous gap between his public writings and his private sentiments about race, demonstrated in his correspondence with friends and colleagues. Unlike scientists like Nott—or, later, Shufeldt, Lydston, and Daniel—Pearl came to critique racial science and race prejudice in his later professional publications, a rebuke that while relatively mild brought him the ire of his friends within eugenic circles. Meanwhile, as Barkan shows, he continued to express unabashed racism in private, indicating his apparent turn against eugenics was driven more by his irritation with its scientists and methodology than concern for racial equality.⁵³⁵ Barkan’s assessment of Pearl’s ambivalence, a racist who nonetheless made insightful and influential criticisms of science’s application to race, is borne out by his 1927 article, “The Biology of Superiority,” and even to some extent his correspondence with Walter White.

Published in the popular periodical, The American Mercury, “The Biology of Superiority” was Pearl’s first and most well-known critique of eugenics. Pearl had been publishing articles on eugenics for decades, including “Breeding Better Men” in 1908, and advocated the creation of eugenic research centers at universities.⁵³⁶ But in 1927, he

⁵³³ Elazar Barkan, The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 210-211.

⁵³⁴ Barkan, 209.

⁵³⁵ For a detailed description of Pearl’s public conversion against eugenics side-by-side with his private racism, see Barkan, 210-220.

⁵³⁶ Barkan, 212.

attacked the field on several fronts, and while his criticisms were ostensibly about eugenics specifically, they had considerable resonance for racial science more broadly construed—something surely not lost on Walter White.⁵³⁷ For one, Pearl asserted, eugenics was overly propagandistic. Propaganda had “always gone hand in hand with the purely scientific, from the very beginning of the development of eugenics.” But he feared the line between propaganda and science had “become almost inextricably confused, so that the literature of eugenics has largely become a mangled mess of ill-grounded and uncritical sociology, economics, anthropology, and politics, full of emotional appeals to class and race prejudices, solemnly put forth as science, and unfortunately accepted as such by the general public.”⁵³⁸ And it was indeed the general public Pearl reached with the article, which he published in a popular rather than purely scientific periodical—though it certainly did not escape the notice of his professional peers. He noted that no scientific man likes to think of himself as engaged in propaganda and thus scientists soothe themselves by calling their endeavors “education, promoting the public welfare,” which often fooled the public as well. “Propaganda is, however, a subtle and insidious reptile,” he remarked. Quoting from English zoologist P. Chalmers Mitchell, he delineated the chief characteristics of propaganda: “to promote the interests of those who contrive it, rather than to benefit those to whom it is addressed,” and “its indifference to the truth,” for “truth is valuable only so far as it is effective.”⁵³⁹

⁵³⁷ Raymond Pearl, “The Biology of Superiority” *The American Mercury*, 12 (November 1927): 257-266.

⁵³⁸ Pearl, 260.

⁵³⁹ Pearl, 260.

Drawing on his “rather extensive acquaintance with the literature of eugenics,” he then offered a remarkably perceptive summary of the chief components of eugenic thought:

1. That all important characters of human beings, physical, mental, and moral, are to such an overwhelming degree determined by heredity—in the sense that those characters will be similar in the offspring to what they were in the parents—that any other factors which may be involved in their determination are relatively unimportant from a racial point of view. 2. That since superior people will thus necessarily have, in the main, superior children, and inferior or defective people will necessarily have inferior or defective children, in the main, the welfare of the race demands that every possible means should be taken to encourage superior people to have large families, and to force inferior people to have small families, or even better none at all. 3. That some races of people are superior to other races, and that intermixture or even contact of the superior with the inferior should be prevented by exclusive immigration laws.

Furthermore, he added, “by superior people, whether individuals, classes, or races, seems always to be meant either: a. “My kind of people,” or, b. “People whom I happen to like.” It is easy to see why such pointed and salient criticism would be so appealing to someone like Walter White and so threatening to white eugenicists, all the more so for having come from within their ranks.

Undermining racial prejudice, however, was not Pearl’s major focus. Rather, the bulk of his article was devoted to attacking eugenics as based on faulty, outdated science. “Leaving aside all discussion of what might perhaps be called the broad humanitarian aspects of these eugenic theses...their public teaching, their legislative enactments, and their moral fervor are plainly based chiefly upon a pre-Mendelian genetics, as outworn and useless as the rind of yesterday’s melon,” he charged. Throughout the article, he repeated that eugenics was largely premised on the belief that “like produces like,” that a superior parent will produce a superior child, an idea he alternately called a “fallacy” and “folklore.”

Despite his critique of eugenics' logic and methodologies, Pearl was still concerned with "the interest of the race" and his conversion was not as dramatic as it seemed. In private, he maintained connections to prominent figures in the eugenics movement and demonstrated deep ambivalence about race in his personal correspondence. Ultimately, Pearl's article was a call to reform eugenics rather than to dismiss it. Specifically, he wanted to bring the field into accordance with established genetic principles toward the goal of "breeding great men." "It would seem to be high time that eugenics cleaned house, and threw away the old-fashioned rubbish which has accumulated in the attic," he concluded in the last line of the article.⁵⁴⁰

Still, it is not difficult to see why White chose to reach out to Pearl as a potential ally. While White does not refer to "Biology of Superiority" by name in his August 31, 1927, letter of introduction, it is likely that the article (published nine months earlier) prompted him to write to Pearl. For one, the publicity surrounding the article was swift and widespread and White was quite well read. Furthermore, The American Mercury was a popular periodical and White himself submitted an article, "I Investigate Lynching," to the journal in 1928, which ran in the January 1929 issue.⁵⁴¹ "The Biology of Superiority" offered an incisive critique of racial science as both inherently biased and scientifically flawed. These critiques were certainly not new to black intellectuals; C.V. Roman, a physician and medical journal editor, for example, attacked ethnology on very similar grounds in his 1916 text, American Civilization and the Negro.⁵⁴² But the fact that Pearl

⁵⁴⁰ Pearl, 266.

⁵⁴¹ Walter F. White, "I Investigate Lynchings," American Mercury, 16:61 (January 1929): 83. See also White's correspondence in The Papers of the NAACP, Part VII: The Anti-Lynching Campaign, 1912-1955; Series A: Anti-Lynching Investigative Files, 1912-1953; Reel 3:0765-0773.

⁵⁴² In American Civilization and the Negro (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1916), Roman argues that the words of racial theorists became deeds in the streets (58). Clearly familiar with the "furor sexualis" model in

was white and an insider in racial science gave his critique an added authority and salience among a white audience, precisely the people White wanted to sway against the practice of lynching. That Pearl had been a notable eugenicist, a field premised on scientific theories of racial difference and hierarchy, made him all the more appealing to White, for he wished white America would follow the prominent scientist in a broader cultural change of heart.

White's first letter to Pearl cited a variety of scientific texts on racial difference and White asked for Pearl's assessment of each study. Notably, he did not seek Pearl's advice on the scientific soundness of widespread claims about black sexuality that permeated both popular and scientific discourse on lynching. Instead, his questions about racial science focused on more general, gender neutral claims about black inferiority, primarily in regards to intellectual capacity. Black women appeared only briefly as forced by economic circumstances to work, possibly risking their children's development in the process; the black man as rapist trope that White refuted elsewhere did not appear in his letter to Pearl at all, even though it had been perpetuated by scientists.⁵⁴³

He began by asking Pearl if several recent comparative studies of black and white brains were "sufficiently accurate or representative, in your opinion, to justify the drawing of definite conclusions as to Negro inferiority?" White asked the same questions of similar studies conducted during the Civil War, which had continued to be employed by many scientists into the 1920s. "In brief, have sufficient measurements and studies of

racial science, he also notes, "The half-scientific rubbish and historical mendacity that seek to parade sexual excesses and moral delinquencies as peculiar racial vices, are a travesty upon learning, a perversion of justice, and a degradation of human reason" (4).

⁵⁴³ While on the decline by the 1920s, even the "castration or lynching" question specifically still appeared on occasion in medical journals. See for example, J.H. James, "Asexualization: A Remedy for Crime and Criminality" *Minnesota Medicine* 3 (1926).

Negro brain capacity and structure been made to justify the sweeping statements of this sort?" White wondered. Exploring the "nature versus nurture" question that had been central to racial science since its inception in the nineteenth century, he suggested that "disuse rather than race" likely determined differences in brains. Similarly, he wondered if the "economic status of Negroes which forces both mother and father to work" might be responsible for the "old assumption that the brains of Negro children close around age fourteen" or if Pearl could cite any legitimate science that supported a biological explanation.⁵⁴⁴ Finally, he queried Pearl about the scientific soundness of intelligence tests that had been employed to further malign the intellectual capacities or potential of the black race. "It may be that the Negro is inferior but the evidence of progress he has made in the arts, sciences and other fields as his economic condition improves, and as the weight of oppressive social conditions is lifted seems to cast grave doubts upon any hasty assumption of inferiority," he demurred. "I very much want your candid opinion and trust you will be generous enough to give it to me."⁵⁴⁵

For the most part, Pearl seemed to do exactly that. "You are certainly upon an interesting, but I should think difficult, problem," Pearl remarked before attempting to tackle White's numerous queries. "Regarding your questions, it is of course, as you realize, impossible to give categorical answers to such questions," he noted, but he "doubt[ed] very much if any of the comparisons of negro brain weights with white brain weights are worth much statistically." While Pearl expressed some concerns with the methodology of these studies, particularly the sample size, he maintained that even if a

⁵⁴⁴ As previously noted, it was a common belief in ethnology dating back to the antebellum era that black and white children were comparable in intellect until adolescence, when whites continued to develop but black brains remained stunted in perpetual childhood.

measurable difference in brain weight between the two races could be demonstrated, “I should attach very little importance to brain weight as evidence of intellectual capacity.” Pearl also expressed skepticism about drawing “broad conclusions” from intelligence tests, “particularly relative to racial matters.” As he had in “The Biology of Superiority,” he critiqued scientists’ tendency to hierarchically rank the races, “because it all depends upon who decides upon the yardstick by which superiority shall be measured.” Still, he admitted he believed the races to be biologically distinct. He further noted that such attempts at ranking were “futile” since racial groups have rarely if ever had “equality of opportunity.” Determining racial superiority was a question “incapable of final resolution” because it could not be separated from “emotion, taste, and prejudices.” Pearl apologized to White for not being more helpful and extended him an invitation to visit when he returned from France.⁵⁴⁶

White, however, found Pearl’s response more than helpful. Indeed, he reprinted large portions of it in Rope and Faggot—with Pearl’s approval. And White did in fact visit Pearl in Baltimore when he returned to America.⁵⁴⁷ Moreover, White sought Pearl’s input on a draft of his chapter on racial science, which Pearl read and returned with his comments. “On the whole I think it is excellent,” Pearl declared. But he did advise White, “you weaken your case greatly by calling [prominent racial scientists] names.” Pearl cautioned him not to refer to one man employed as a “full professor in good standing in a good, respectable university” as a “near-scientist,” even if his conclusions were wrong,

⁵⁴⁵ Walter White to Raymond Pearl, 8/31/1927. Raymond Pearl Papers, American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA). Correspondence—Series 1, Box 21: NAACP Folder #1.

⁵⁴⁶ Raymond Pearl to Walter White, 9/20/1927. Raymond Pearl Papers, American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA). Correspondence—Series 1, Box 21: NAACP Folder #1.

⁵⁴⁷ Pearl mentions White’s visit in a letter dated 4/28/1928, Raymond Pearl Papers, APS, Correspondence—Series 1, Box 21: NAACP Folder #1.

and warned against implying another scientist was “only slightly more erudite and respectable than the Ku Klux Klan.” White graciously thanked Pearl for his advice, replying, “you are right about the epithets and out they come.”⁵⁴⁸ The finished product reveals that White ignored the second portion of Pearl’s advice by continuing to identify scientists by name whom he deemed only “slightly more erudite and respectable” than the Klan.⁵⁴⁹

On behalf of his publisher, White asked Pearl if he would be willing to read the final draft of Rope and Faggot and offer a brief endorsement, presumably for the cover or publicity materials. Pearl declined, citing a busy schedule that would prevent him from attending to the matter in time. Nonetheless, White sent Pearl an inscribed copy of the book on March 27, 1929; Pearl responded within days, with thanks and congratulations. “I read it last night in one sitting. What a dreadful indictment of the American people the book is. It will surely have a large sale,” Pearl declared, before warning White that he should not “venture South of Baltimore in the future without a large and determined bodyguard.” Ever persistent and mindful of the added authority his book would gain with an endorsement from a prominent white scientist like Pearl, White changed tacks and asked Pearl if the publisher could quote from his letter of congratulations. Again, Pearl declined.⁵⁵⁰ Despite Pearl’s refusal to endorse the book publicly, the two men continued to correspond congenially for years.

In the chapter of Rope and Faggot devoted to racial science, White began by quoting Herbert Adolphus Miller, a white professor of sociology at Ohio State

⁵⁴⁸ Raymond Pearl to Walter White, 9/20/1927, and Walter White to Raymond Pearl, 5/19/1928. Raymond Pearl Papers, APS, NAACP Folder #1.

⁵⁴⁹ White, Rope and Faggot, 118-119.

University, who had given an address, “Science, Pseudo-Science and the Race Question,” before the NAACP in 1925. Miller warned that science went all too often unquestioned; it had taken on the absolute authority previously reserved for religion. For this reason, science could be as dangerous as it could be instructive: “‘There is also,’ said Professor Miller, ‘the appropriation of the scientific jargon by the totally unscientific who rationalize their prejudices and think that God intended it so because they can say it in scientific terms.’” Such was the case with lynching, White argued. As it had since the nineteenth century, science gave credence to and fueled existing racial prejudices, but more importantly, it influenced not just ideas about black people but how they were treated—or mistreated—in life.

White’s use of Miller set the stage for the tenor and structure of the chapter as a whole. Throughout, he cited and summarized a variety of scientific studies by white men that endeavored to prove black inferiority, but he also strategically employed the critiques of more sympathetic white scientists like Pearl, whose letters he quoted extensively in the chapter. He discussed at length a number of well-known studies of brain weight, skulls, or intelligence tests that “proved” black inferiority, then identified holes in the study’s logic or methodological problems, bolstering his critiques by citing other white scientists. In so doing, he represented scientific claims about black inferiority as under attack not just by himself and other African Americans, but also by “scientists and scholars worthy of the name,” knowing all too well the added authority these scientists’ names would carry.⁵⁵¹ These white scientists might not have gone as far as

⁵⁵⁰ White to Pearl, 1/31/1929; Pearl to White, 2/1/1929; Pearl to White, 4/3/1929; telegram from White to Pearl, 4/11/1929; and Pearl to White, 4/11/1929, Raymond Pearl Papers, APS, NAACP Folder #1.

⁵⁵¹ White, Rope and Faggot, 114-115.

White would have liked in their challenges to claims about black inferiority, but he used them nonetheless. For example, he cited a Pearl article, “Variation and Correlation in Brain Weight,” which conceded that brain weights did indeed differ by race, but “brain-weight and intelligence in the sense of mental capacity are probably not sensibly correlated.”⁵⁵² Pearl and the other more sympathetic white scientists White cited stopped short of rejecting the existence of biological differences between the races, but their caution against extrapolating broadly about those differences was nevertheless appealing to the pragmatic White. However, he noted, “It is almost a tragic circumstance that such reasoned and temperate conclusions as these gain circulation at but a fraction of the speed of those which sow the seed of racial hatreds and antagonisms. It is also deplorable that especially in the United States prejudices...all but overwhelm those who counsel sanity and scientific accuracy.”⁵⁵³

Throughout the chapter, White focused on primarily gender neutral claims about black intellectual capacity rather than the highly charged issues of sex and manhood that dominated both popular and scientific discourse on lynching. As we have seen, many racial scientists added fuel to white paranoia about miscegenation and widespread beliefs in black hypersexuality. But White did not address these claims in his discussion of racial science’s influence on lynching. Instead, he challenged broad scientific claims about black physical and intellectual inferiority, which he insisted made lynching possible by devaluing black lives. Even his brief discussion of the “question which so sorely agitates American minds—intermarriage” focused on scientific claims about the brain size and

⁵⁵² Raymond Pearl, “Variation and Correlation in Brain Weight,” *Biometrika*, IV, quoted in White, *Rope and Faggot*, 127.

⁵⁵³ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 117-118.

capacities of the mulatto, rather than the associated but more volatile issues of sex. He did, however, note the irony of scientific considerations of the mulatto, in which intermarriage with whites could either be the black race's destruction or its salvation: "Here we have a bewildering example of much of the reasoning on the alleged inferiority of the Negro—first, the mulatto is 'deceptive,' 'dishonest,' 'inferior physically and mentally,' and 'dangerous and he 'almost invariably' dies young the nearer he approaches the Caucasian; and, second, the only hope of making anything at all of the poor Negro lies in intermarriage and crossing with other races!"⁵⁵⁴ Mirroring antebellum ethnology in his focus on brains and skulls rather than sexed bodies, he argued that scientific claims that the black race was limited in its intellectual and social possibilities by inferior biology contributed to a general climate of racial animosity that required little spark to boil over into violence.

However, while he focused on relatively gender neutral claims about black people, he identified the key players in the perpetuation of racist ideology—and its negation—as an entirely male group. He was of course not entirely incorrect in this assessment; men had continued to dominate the racial sciences on both sides of the "negro question." A number of women, including Alice Fletcher and Matilda Stevenson, had made names for themselves in cultural anthropology, a field that was presenting tremendous challenges to scientific racism. His omission of these female scientists may have had as much to do with his focus on biological studies of race, in which there were indeed virtually no women, as his general antipathy toward powerful women and his

⁵⁵⁴ White, Rope and Faggot, 132-133.

pragmatic emphasis on the scientists whose names would carry the most authority—white men.

White maintained that three overlapping and mutually informing groups of men perpetuated the notion of a natural racial hierarchy: the Klan, scientists who “attempt[ed] to prove Negro inferiority by brain weight or structure,” and Nordicists, which he referred to as “the ballyhoo experts of a blue-eyed, blond-haired, dolichocelphalic [large head/brain] superman.”⁵⁵⁵ White likely wrote these words with a keen sense of irony: his varied accomplishments earned this blond-haired, blue-eyed African American the title of Renaissance man if not superman. For White, the role of the Klan in lynching was obvious and needed little elaboration. But racial scientists and Nordicists also played a “not unimportant part in the creation of a national psychology toward the Negro” and promoted violence against blacks. Furthermore, White believed, white race pride was as dangerous as theories of black inferiority. “Race pride and conceit” resulted in “the lawlessness and bigotry which find outlet in, among other ways, lynch-law.”⁵⁵⁶ He bemoaned the huge number of hearts and minds reached by all three groups of men, but he insisted it was essential to address the claims of the often overlooked—and thus all the more insidious—group, the scientists. After all, White noted, scientists reached and influenced large portions of society that would never align themselves with the Klan or formal white supremacy organizations.

White’s tactic of poking holes in various studies asserting black inferiority proved in the end to be a rhetorical and ideological trap. Like the nineteenth-century black ethnologists, White attempted to dismantle the master’s house using the master’s tools.

⁵⁵⁵ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 121.

Much like Pearl, he ended up implying that racial science was not inherently flawed; the science itself should simply be better. “It is certain that no conclusions regarding the Negro brain, whether those conclusions be absolute or relative, are worth very much until examination by unbiased and competent scientists is made of a sufficiently large number of Negro brains,” White declared.⁵⁵⁷ The whole scientific endeavor of comparing races need not be abandoned entirely, he seemed to say, remarking: “For whatever the result may be worth, it is not be hoped that the methodology of the past will be abandoned and not only that qualified and unprejudiced experts may study a sufficient number of Negro brains to make their findings valuable and trustworthy.”⁵⁵⁸ In so doing, White lent a certain degree of legitimacy to the very science he set out to undermine.

White’s omission of any discussion of scientific claims about black sexuality from his chapter on racial science, in contrast, was likely strategic. White was certainly aware that scientists had perpetuated the image of black men as a sexual threat. For one, in Rope and Faggot, he discussed scientific work on race dating from the 1870s to the 1920s, a period that coincided with racial scientists’ fixation on “furor sexualis” among black men. Scientific claims about the supposedly enlarged genitalia and unrestrained sexual impulses of black men routinely appeared in the same journals from which White cited studies of brain weight and intelligence. Furthermore, claims about black hypersexuality were sometimes espoused by the same scientists White cited on issues of race and intelligence. For example, he discussed a comparison of black and white brains in a 1906 article, “Some Racial Peculiarities of the Negro Brain,” written by University

⁵⁵⁶ White, Rope and Faggot, 123.

⁵⁵⁷ White, Rope and Faggot, 134-135.

⁵⁵⁸ White, Rope and Faggot, 136-137.

of Virginia physician Robert Bennett Bean and published in the American Journal of Anatomy. However, White ignores Bean's assertion in the same article that black men were "under stimulation passionate" and suffered from a "lack of self-control, especially in connection with the sexual relation."⁵⁵⁹ Nor was this aspect of Bean's article mentioned in White's chapter on "Sex and Lynching." Even though he analyzes there the kind of rhetoric used by Bean, White did not associate it with Bean or any other scientist.

White's omission of scientists from his analysis of the construction and perpetuation of the most volatile stereotypes about black men was not simply symptomatic of White's general evasiveness or timidity about issues of sex. On the contrary, White's discussions throughout Rope and Faggot of sex and its role in the lynch mob mentality were pointed and unflinching. Indeed, one suspects that Pearl's caution to White that upon the book's publication he never return to the South without bodyguards was shrewd advice. White described the South as "sex-obsessed" because the region's backwardness left its citizens wanting for entertainment and the southern brand of strict but emotional religiosity worked its followers into a frenzy with no permissible outlet. The problem was compounded by widespread ignorance and illiteracy, White maintained.⁵⁶⁰ White women specifically were prone to "hysteria where Negroes are concerned...an aspect of the question of lynching which needs investigation by a competent psychologist."⁵⁶¹ Women accusing black men of rape in the South were not to be taken seriously; in his experience, these women were largely young girls "passing through the difficult period of adolescence," menopausal or postmenopausal women,

⁵⁵⁹ Robert Bennett Bean, "Some Racial Peculiarities of the Negro Brain," American Journal of Anatomy, 5:4, 409.

⁵⁶⁰ White, Rope and Faggot, 56-61.

⁵⁶¹ White, Rope and Faggot, 57.

women in unhappy marriages to “unattractive husbands,” and “spinsters.” With the large scope of the female lifespan and experience covered by White, his anti-lynching argument also seemed to reveal his thoughts about women in general, that few, if any, were to be taken seriously.

As for white men, White echoed Wells in arguing that lynching was an indictment of white rather than black manhood. To counter the connection of lynching with rape, White frequently pointed to the number of women and children lynched. With considerable irony and turning the rhetoric of civilized manhood on its head, White broke the number down by state: “Mississippi leads in this exhibition of masculine chivalry, with sixteen women victims.” He continued, “Tennessee and South Carolina mobs have bravely murdered seven women each...Three of the twelve Texas victims were a mother and her two young daughters killed by a mob in 1918, when they ‘threatened a white man.’ Thus was white civilization maintained!”⁵⁶² White further argued that the “bogey of black rape” was a manifestation of white men’s fears that black men would return in kind to white women the treatment white men had inflicted on black women throughout American history. White pointed out that the inheritance of slave status through the mother had given white men not only tacit permission but economic incentive for raping enslaved women and that since Emancipation, miscegenation continued to be only tolerated in one direction: “The man who attempts to maintain a fixed respect towards one group of women and indulges meanwhile in all manner of immoralities with another group may seek ever so hard to maintain such a balanced dual standard.” Moreover, “For more than two hundred years this moral deterioration has affected the Southern states,

⁵⁶² White, Rope and Faggot, 227.

and from that decay arises the most terrifying of all aspects of the race problem to the white man.”⁵⁶³ This terrifying aspect of the race problem was the prospect of black men breaking through the “dual standard” of the South and asserting the same male prerogatives to female bodies that existed under a traditional white patriarchy.⁵⁶⁴ In fact, White noted, many lynchings occurred in the South because black men had tried to protect their own women, not because they threatened white women.

Furthermore, white men’s supposed repulsion for black physiognomy was more than disproved by high rates of miscegenation before, during, and after slavery, but “suspicion that the absence of repulsion applies to both sexes of both races” motivated the emasculation that often accompanied lynch violence. Lynching then represented white men’s fears of sexual as well as economic and political competition from black men. Castration was also a frequent component of lynching because of “stories of Negro superiority in sex relations.” “And it did not matter whether or not that rumoured superiority existed in fact or fancy—the very violence of opposition by the mobbist seemed to lend credence to the truth of the assertion,” White added.⁵⁶⁵

Notably, White himself did not lend credence to such “stories” of black hypermasculinity or hypersexuality by attributing them to scientists. Instead, such claims appeared as rumors of indeterminate origin. “Of all the emotional determinants of lynching none is more potent in blocking approach to a solution than sex, and of all the factors, emotional or otherwise, none is less openly and honestly discussed,” White remarked. “With the most intransigent Negrophobe it is possible to conduct a

⁵⁶³ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 62-63.

⁵⁶⁴ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 62-69.

⁵⁶⁵ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 67-68.

conversation of certain phases of the race question and do so with a measured calmness of manner,” he maintained, and the brief correspondence he exchanged with scientist Robert Bennett Bean seemed to bear this out. “But when one approaches, however delicately or remotely, the question of sex or ‘social equality,’” he added, “reason and judicial calm promptly take flight. Berserk rage usually seizes one’s conversational vis-à-vis.”⁵⁶⁶ To be sure, the trope of the black sexual predator pervaded popular as well as scientific discourse around lynching. But White likely feared that attaching the names of scientists to these explosive claims would lend them greater legitimacy even as he was trying to critique them.

Walter White’s engagement with racial science—and racial scientists—was complex and ambivalent. For White, scientists were both sinners and saviors in his campaign against racial violence. He enlisted the help of insiders like Pearl to fight science with science. But he could not escape the limitations of working within a field that, even at its most sympathetic to the black race, was premised on innate biological difference between the races. His relationship with Pearl provides a perfect example of the difficulties he faced. In the years that followed the publication of Rope and Faggot in 1929, the two men maintained their correspondence and White continued to seek additional information on the issue of differences in brain weight or size between the races. In 1934, Pearl published an article, “The Weight of the Negro Brain,” in the journal Science. Therein, he reexamined the many racial studies of brains and crania, dating back to Samuel Morton and the Civil War anthropometric studies.⁵⁶⁷ Pearl often found fault with the studies’ methodologies, but nonetheless supported their conclusion

⁵⁶⁶ White, Rope and Faggot, 54. On White’s correspondence with Bean, see page 124.

that black brains were 92.1 percent the size of whites'. Subjecting previous measurements to his own biometric processes, he declared, "The approximate agreement of this with Morton's [and others] results is clear, and may reasonably be taken to lead to the conclusion that the Negro brain is, on the average, from 8 to 10 percent lighter than the fairly comparable white brain."⁵⁶⁸ Though he had noted in his first letter to White seven years earlier that he cautioned against drawing conclusions from racial measurements, he offered no such warning here. White must have been disappointed, but he made no mention of it in his letters to Pearl, which continued after the article's publication.

Ultimately, White's relationship with Pearl—and with racial science more generally—was pragmatic. In combating lynching, White sought to disprove widespread beliefs in black inferiority that had long been legitimized by science, but in so doing, he divorced from racial science its most dangerous claims about sex and gender. As White noted, "sex with all its connotations so muddies the waters of reason that it is impossible to bring the conversation back to its more impassioned state."⁵⁶⁹ And a consideration of science—particularly with so much riding on it—demanded reason.

Conclusion

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century America, lynching represented a nexus between scientific discourse on race and sex, racism enacted on living bodies in the streets, and black mobilization in response. Racial scientists reinforced and legitimized the popular notion that black men were an ever-growing sexual threat to

⁵⁶⁷ Raymond Pearl, "The Weight of the Negro Brain" *Science*, 80 (November 9, 1934): 431-434.

⁵⁶⁸ Pearl, "The Weight of the Negro Brain," 433.

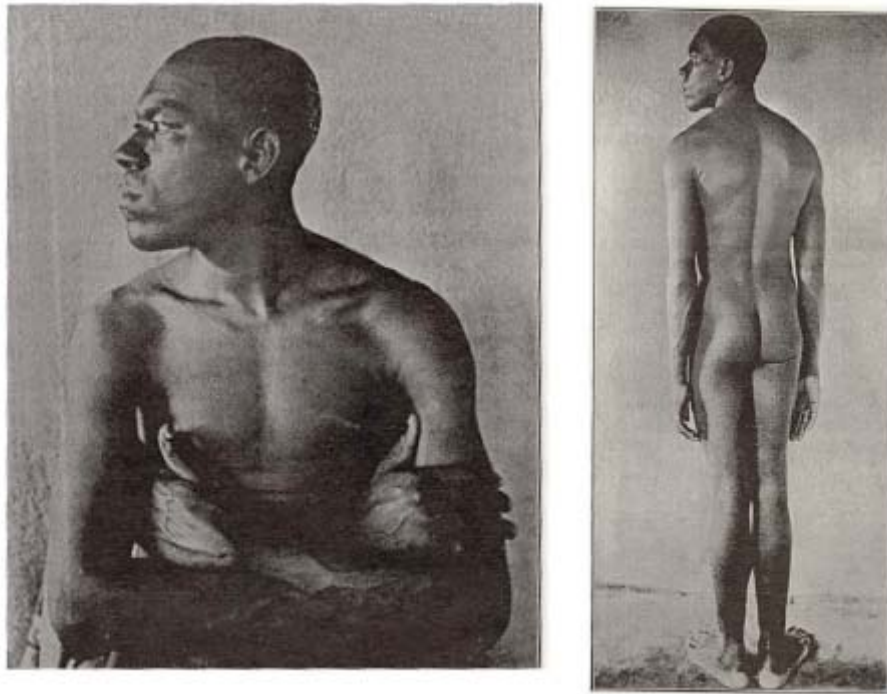
⁵⁶⁹ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 54.

white women by describing the problem in terms of pathology and defective biology. As Walter White rightly pointed out, scientific theories about black inferiority—and threat—enabled and even provoked racial violence. But scientists like Lydston and Daniel saw themselves as part of the solution to the “negro problem” of rape and the extralegal violence that was its result. The issue of authority was an important factor driving scientists’ advocacy of castration or other surgical procedures instead of lynching. After all, lynching would certainly achieve the same ends as castration in preventing rapists from repeating their crimes. But lynching was not a medical solution to black rape. And due in large part to the anti-lynching activism by Wells at the turn-of-the-century and the NAACP beginning in 1909, lynching was an increasingly unpopular practice to endorse publicly even if it was still tacitly accepted and allowed.

Lynching, then, embodied the complex and mutually informing relationship between science and society around issues of race. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, scientists played a crucial role in constructing race a biological category of difference and offered advice on the problems that race presented in American society. And as we have also seen, scientists frequently used gender and sex difference to bolster their claims about black inferiority. Furthermore, racial science shaped and was shaped by American race relations and political rhetoric. However, scientific claims about racial difference and hierarchy were always contested. Scientists’ engagement in the question of “castration or lynching” brought their work in the public eye more than ever before and garnered much support in the short term, but it also marked the beginning of scientific racism’s demise in America. By the time of White’s anti-lynching work in the

1920s and 1930s, science offered as much potential to dismantle racial hierarchy as to maintain it.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figures 4.1 and 4.2. “Profile” and “Photo from life by the author,” America’s Greatest Problem: The Negro (R.W. Shufeldt, 1915).



Figure 4.3. “Walter White, 1935,” Credit: Visual Materials from the NAACP Records, Library of Congress. Photo was featured on the cover of Time Magazine (January 24, 1938).

Conclusion—The Fall and Rise of Racial Science

By the time Walter White published his autobiography in 1948, both scientific racism and racial violence were on the wane. While his scientific correspondent Raymond Pearl never gave up his belief that the races were biologically different, even if he warned publicly against drawing conclusions about superiority and inferiority, White argued until the end that race was fundamentally a fiction. White revisited the pernicious effect of racial science in the final pages of his memoir, published seven years before his death. “At the root of my anger and my frequent deep discouragement, is the knowledge that all race prejudice...is founded on one of the most absurd fallacies in all thought—the belief that there is a basic difference between a Negro and a white man,” he lamented, adding “There is no such basic difference.” However, he believed there was cause for hope. Just as scientists had lent support and authority to human prejudice for over a century, scientists also held the redemptive power to discredit and dismantle racism—even if Pearl himself had fallen short of White’s objective in that regard. With mounting optimism, White observed, “More and more scientists, realizing the dire importance of the race problem to human welfare, are going out of their way to state unequivocally the falseness of the belief that such a difference exists...Even the belief that racial markings are apparent in a Negro, no matter how light he is, has over and over been proved false.”⁵⁷⁰ Undermining one of the most central tenets of racial science—that the physical body could be read with scientific precision to reveal the character and capacities of its owner—White posited:

⁵⁷⁰ Walter White, A Man Called White (New York: Arno Press, 1969, 1948), 363-364.

Suppose the skin of every Negro in America were suddenly to turn white. What would happen to all the notions about Negroes, the bases on which are built race prejudice and race hatred? What would become of their presumed shiftlessness, their cowardice, their dishonesty, their stupidity, their body odor? Would they not merge with the shiftlessness, the cowardice, the dishonesty, the stupidity, and the body odor of the whites? Would they not then be subject to individual judgment in matters of abilities, energies, honesty, cleanliness, as are whites? How else could they be judged?

As White understood, rather than an objective measure of racial difference, the body revealed only what the scientist expected to see in it. As he drew his life story to a close, he described a memorable encounter he had with a white scientist, Sir Arthur Keith, the president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, who he met in London several years earlier. "Before he spoke a word of greeting, he extended a long, bony hand in welcome and, abstractedly, continued to hold my hand as he examined my features intently," White recounted. "The only way I can tell that you have Negro blood is by the shape of your eyes," Keith told the blond-haired, blue-eyed White immediately upon their meeting. White recalled:

Startled, I asked him, "What is there in them which reveals my ancestry?" He did not reply immediately but continued his scrutiny of my face. It probably lasted no more than a minute, but the time seemed much longer. Sir Arthur then shook his head as though trying to rid it of cobwebs.

Time stood still for White in that loaded moment, a quintessential snapshot of scientific engagement with race. The white male scientist stood face to face with his black subject, struggling to read the man's physiognomy for some larger meaning. But unlike Samuel Morton's skulls or the thousands of African-American Civil War soldiers or the anonymous black bodies interspersed throughout R.W. Shufeldt's racial invectives, Keith's subject had the opportunity to speak back. And, struck momentarily silent by White's challenge, Keith actually reconsidered his preconceptions about race. It is not

insignificant that White chose an anecdote about a scientist to demonstrate the fiction of race in the final pages of his autobiography. Scientists had lent authority to human prejudice and fueled the fires of racial violence, White believed, but their ideological conversion, however flawed, embodied White's optimism that racism could also be overcome through scientific reason. It is also worth noting that White did not use Pearl, who appeared nowhere in White's autobiography, as an example here. Instead, White's brief encounter with Keith was all the more powerful rhetorically because Keith's change of heart about the logic of racial science could stand alone, untainted by subsequent disappointing words and actions that revealed his conversion to be incomplete. For White, the encounter represented a critical moment of dialogue and, ultimately, hope. In response to White's startled query, Arthur Keith answered, "No—I'm wrong. If you had not told me in one of your letters that you have Negro ancestry, I would have seen nothing. But because you did tell me, I thought I saw some indication. That's unscientific. Sit down, won't you—and let's talk."⁵⁷¹

Indeed, by the 1940s, the character of racial science and its function in society had changed considerably. For one, science no longer had the same degree of cultural authority over questions of race that it had in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Eugenics, one of the more public and popular wings of racial science, for example, lost credibility in the United States after World War II, largely as a result of its association with the enemy—the Nazis, who took scientific racism to horrifying new extremes. In addition, growing numbers of scientists were questioning or openly challenging the long-

⁵⁷¹ White, 364-365.

held scientific belief in innate and permanent racial differences, differences that also implied natural inferiority and superiority.⁵⁷² In part, this change reflected a new generation of scientists, but as illustrated by White's interactions with Pearl and Keith, some individual scientists were also reconsidering their own previously held convictions. While scientists certainly did not abandon their search for quantifiable differences between the races after the 1930s and 40s—quite the contrary, they conducted comparative studies on everything from intelligence to sexual behavior—they were no longer at the center of U.S. racial discourse and race relations.⁵⁷³ In mid-century America, the nation's most contentious battles over race occurred in the courts.

Ultimately though, one of the biggest challenges to scientific racism came from science itself, with the development of cultural anthropology as a discipline. Widely considered the founder of the field, anthropologist and Columbia University professor Franz Boas was no stranger to racism himself, having immigrated to the United States in part to escape anti-Semitism in his native Germany. Beginning in the 1890s, he argued that culture and environment, not biology, best explained human variation and amassed considerable evidence showing that physical characteristics varied greatly within each race, particularly across generations. Moreover, he suggested that racial discrimination, not inherent inferiority, had limited black advancement in the United States and insisted that a direct link between intelligence and race had never been proven by science, critiquing scientists' longstanding focus on head size.

⁵⁷² See especially, Elazar Barkan The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁵⁷³ On racial science in the second half of the twentieth century, see Joseph Graves, Jr., The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 140-172.

However, as anthropologist Lee Baker explains, Boas' views largely fell on deaf ears at the turn of the century, drowned out by still dominant biological paradigms of racial difference. For instance, Daniel Brinton, a professor of ethnology and archaeology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, discussed in Chapter One, rebutted Boas' claims in a number of popular and scientific publications in which Boas was not given an audience at that point. Seemingly undaunted, over the next two decades, Boas attacked the logic of eugenics and, as part of a lengthy government study of immigration, proposed a fluid model of race in which the physical and mental character of groups of people changed as their environment changed.⁵⁷⁴ "At this point Boas was provoking debate in scientific circles but was virtually discredited by the federal government [for whom he had worked on immigration]. Eventually, however, his concept of culture and his defense of racial equality would become the dominant paradigm in the social sciences," Baker notes.⁵⁷⁵ During Boas' lifetime, Baker further explains, "his impact as an activist was limited to influencing a small number of anthropologists at Columbia University and to lending his name to a few radical intellectuals...His impact was also limited within the sciences and among the educated public because of the virulent racism that permeated U.S. social relations."⁵⁷⁶

Still, carrying on his model of cultural relativism and explicitly anti-racist agenda, a number of Boas' students at Columbia went on to be influential anthropologists in their own right and notably, the two most well known among them were women: Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. In its insistence that no race was innately or irrevocably

⁵⁷⁴ Lee Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 101-107.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 107.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 123.

inferior as well as its growing inclusion of female scientists, Boasian anthropology stood in sharp contrast to nineteenth-century racial science. Moreover, Benedict and Mead's anthropological work on race also enabled them to challenge social constraints placed on women, in both their own lives and their critiques-by-comparison of America's gender system. As Elazar Barkan notes in The Retreat of Scientific Racism, "Benedict and Mead were of 'Old American' lineage, well placed in society with good prospects for a moderately successful life in traditional female roles. In their choice of anthropology, both sought to rebel against social conventions, each in her own style and temperament."⁵⁷⁷ In this regard, they are not just part of a Boasian intellectual tradition, but also a proto-feminist genealogy of women who escaped the home by entering the (ethnographic) field, dating back to the late nineteenth century with Matilda Coxe Stevenson's work with the Zuni in the American Southwest, Alice Fletcher's ethnographic studies of the Plains Indians through the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, and Mary French-Sheldon's racially charged expedition across East Africa.⁵⁷⁸

While female involvement in anthropology in and of itself does not appear to be a primary reason for the "retreat of scientific racism," women like Mead and Benedict are nonetheless noteworthy participants in the project of re-making race in the early to mid-twentieth century. As I have emphasized throughout this project, who scientists were—their personal backgrounds and cultural politics—shaped the science they produced. The scientists I have discussed in the body of my project have nearly all been male, reflecting

⁵⁷⁷ Barkan, 127.

⁵⁷⁸ For more on Matilda Coxe Stevenson, see Will Roscoe, The Zuni Man-Woman (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991). On Mary French-Sheldon and Alice Fletcher, see Louise Michele

the composition of racial science during my chronological scope and my focus on proponents of biological frameworks of racial difference, who were very much an overwhelmingly male group.

Certainly, gender, as well as sexuality, featured prominently in Mead and Benedict's professional writings on race. Mead in particular used her studies of "primitive" societies to critique the rigidity of "Western" gender roles and sexual mores. Mead's groundbreaking 1928 book, Coming of Age in Samoa, and 1935's Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies both circulated widely within and outside of scientific circles and Mead soon developed a lifelong public presence, speaking on a variety of contemporary issues and writing for numerous popular periodicals. While her work was intended to denaturalize gender and racial hierarchies and understand sexuality in its specific cultural contexts, this nuanced argument was likely lost on some in her wider audience, who could instead read her work as titillating and voyeuristic accounts that reaffirmed America's longstanding association between "primitiveness," hypersexuality, and deviance from white, middle-class gender norms.

Indeed, gender and sexuality often served as markers of cultural difference in modern anthropology, just as they had previously served as markers of biological difference for ethnologists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to historian Louise Michele Newman, Mead "broke with an earlier tradition of evolutionary or Victorian anthropology that supported Anglo-Americans' definitions of themselves as a superior race because of their supposedly unique, race-specific biological forms of

Newman, White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102-115 and 121-131, respectively.

sexual difference.” The cultural concept of race could engender its own claims to superiority, however:

Yet, while Mead challenged Anglo-Saxons’ beliefs in their inherent biological superiority to primitive peoples, she did not challenge their belief in the cultural superiority of Western civilization...For Mead, primitive societies provided Americans with conceptual alternatives to reflect on, but she never advocated that the United States remake itself in the image of the primitive.

Undeniably, Mead’s work marked an important turning point in science, but nonetheless promoted a racial paradigm that, while more fluid, still emphasized differences between groups of people. As Newman quite rightly points out, “opposition movements retain residues of that which they oppose.”⁵⁷⁹

To be sure, the scientific trend toward cultural rather than biological understandings of race did not mean an end to racism—within or outside the world of science. Enormously popular in mid-twentieth century America, National Geographic brought anthropology—and near fetishistic imagery of scantily clad “primitives”—to an even wider audience, for example. Ostensibly celebrating human diversity, the periodical simultaneously reaffirmed traditional assumptions about “primitiveness” and revived old ethnological tropes, with frequent images of dark skinned people engaged in physical labor and light skinned people in more leisurely pursuits.⁵⁸⁰ And in his 1965 The Negro Family: The Case for National Action—soon better known as the Moynihan Report—Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then Assistant Secretary for Policy Planning and Research in

⁵⁷⁹ Newman, 159.

⁵⁸⁰ Catherine A Lutz and Jane L. Collins, “The Color of Sex: Postwar Photographic Histories of Race and Gender in National Geographic Magazine,” in The Gender/ Sexuality Reader, eds. Roger N. Lancaster and Micaela di Leonardo New York: Routledge, 1997), 291-306. In their fascinating discussion of the racial politics at play in National Geographic, Lutz and Collins further argue that the magazine also amidst the social upheaval of Civil Rights, Black Power, and race riots in the 1950s 1960s, the magazine’s images also served to render race “safe” by placing various groups in their “natural” environments in isolation from each other.

the U.S. Labor Department, described the African-American community as suffering from a kind of cultural pathology. Though he framed the problem in terms of “culture,” his language and logic nonetheless echoed earlier biological paradigms of race and pathology. Moreover, gender and sexuality were central to Moynihan’s pathology model. He blamed the “matriarchal culture” of black America for hindering the race’s progress. According to Moynihan, black women were generally better educated and more often employed than their male counterparts, emasculating black men and driving them out of the home, which in turn left the community without strong male figures and black families in disarray. At the same time, he also called black women’s sexual respectability into question by arguing they were more prone to illegitimate births, further undermining African American family and community structures.

Furthermore, the “biology is destiny” ethos in regards to race, gender, and sexuality that I have discussed throughout this project never completely disappeared, particularly outside the scientific world. Among the myriad contemporary examples, two involved public remarks by the presidents of large universities about the intellectual capacities of racial minorities and women that demonstrated revealing continuities between nineteenth-century science and current American discourse. In a 1994 speech before the Rutgers Council of the American Association of University Professors, Rutgers University president Francis Lawrence remarked that minority students lacked the “genetic hereditary background” to excel on standardized tests. Similarly, Harvard University President Larry Summers suggested at a 2005 conference on diversity in science careers that “socialization and continuing discrimination” were perhaps less responsible for the small representation of women in the field than women’s own

biologically determined capacities (or incapacities). That is, women simply had less innate aptitude for certain scientific professions than men.⁵⁸¹ Though not without their supporters, Lawrence and Summers' comments were met with much wider and more publicized condemnation than they ever would have been in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however. Meanwhile, television and print news media regularly report on scientific studies seeking a biological basis of homosexuality. From the search for the "gay gene" to a widely reported story that linked homosexuality to the ratio of index to ring finger lengths, scientists have continued to scrutinize every part of the body for clues to sexual orientation.⁵⁸² In "Born gay? How biology may drive orientation," a lengthy article in the Seattle Times that described the finger length studies, among other scientific investigations on homosexuality and heredity, science reporter Sandi Doughton clearly articulated the sociopolitical context—and implications—of such work:

The social and political implications of the research are impossible to ignore, leading to unease on both sides of the gay-rights debate. If science proves homosexuality is innate, is there any basis to deny gays equal treatment—including the right to marry? But if scientists unravel the roots of sexual orientation, will it some day be possible to "fix" people who don't fit the norms or abort fetuses likely to be born gay?⁵⁸³

While much has changed in American culture since the turn of the century, the scientific debate Doughton depicted in 2005 shared more than a passing resemblance to scientists' considerations of the "congenital" or "acquired" nature of homosexuality a hundred years

⁵⁸¹ "Online Focus: Women and Science" PBS Online (February 22, 2005), http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/science/jan-june05/harvard_02-22a.html. This site includes a full transcript of Summers' remarks, as well as reactions from female faculty and scientists.

⁵⁸² See for example, Roy Porter, "Born that Way? More from the doctor who says homosexuality may be a matter of genetics, and from some of his colleagues," New York Times (August 11, 1996), BR8; Nicholas Kristof, "Gay at Birth," New York Times (October 25, 2003), A19; "The 'Gay Gene' Debate," PBS Online, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/genetics/>; "A Finger on Sexuality" BBC (March 29, 2000), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/695142.stm>.

earlier. And the concern she raises about such science today underscores that the “nature or nurture” question in regards to homosexuality also continues to have eugenic implications.⁵⁸⁴

Moreover, the last decade has seen a resurgence of scientific interest in biology and race. Considerable biomedical research has been devoted to comparing disease rates across racial groups and the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved the first race-specified drug, BiDiL, marketed by the pharmaceutical company Nitromed exclusively to African Americans for heart failure. In addition to ethical concerns and uncertainty about its effectiveness, scientific and public debates over the controversial drug frequently raise the question: “Is race biological?”⁵⁸⁵ Advances in DNA research have also engendered scientific investigation into race and racial histories. In conjunction with the African American Roots Project, which provides similar services for members of the general public, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. combined genealogical research and DNA mapping to trace the ancestry and family histories of famous African Americans in a series of television documentaries. In the nineteenth century, ethnologists used science to deny the black race a history, any claim to civilization, and even a place

⁵⁸³ Sandi Doughton, “Born gay? How biology may drive orientation,” *Seattle Times* (June 19, 2005), http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2002340883_gayscience19m.html.

⁵⁸⁴ On the genealogy and implications of the contemporary “nature/nurture” debate among scientists, see William Byne, Udo Schuklenk, Mitchell Lasco, and Jack Drescher, “The Origins of Homosexuality: No Genetic Link to Social Change” and C. Phoebe Lostroh and Amanda Udis-Kessler, “Diversity and Complexity in Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transsexual Responses to the ‘Gay Gene’ Debates” in *The Double-Edged Helix: Social Implications of Genetics in a Diverse Society*, eds. Joseph S. Alper, Catherine Ard, Adrienne Asch, John Beckwith, Peter Conrad, and Lisa Geller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Vernon Rosario, *Homosexuality and Science: A Guide to the Debates* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2002); and Richard Pillard, “The Search for a Genetic Influence on Sexual Orientation” and Garland Allen, “The Double-Edged Sword of Genetic Determinism: Social and Political Agendas in Genetic Studies of Homosexuality, 1940-1994” in *Science and Homosexualities*, ed. Vernon Rosario (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁵⁸⁵ See for example, “Controversial Heart Drug,” *PBS Online NewsHour* (June 17, 2005), http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/jan-june05/heart_6-17.html.

in the human family. There is certainly a poignant irony, then, in science being used to help African Americans to reclaim their past. To be sure, the cultural politics driving this work on DNA or on disease are quite different than the nineteenth and early twentieth century racial science I have described here. Still, I have reservations about any scientific endeavors that fix race as a biological entity, no matter how noble the intentions—all the more so because throughout my work on this project I have seen that any scientific conclusion that implied racial difference of some kind could have a life well beyond the scientist's intent.⁵⁸⁶

Indeed, this project has described how race became the purview of science and the processes by which race was constructed as a biological phenomenon with far-reaching social, cultural, and political resonance. It has told the story of an overlapping, interdisciplinary group of scientists who asserted their relevance and authority by offering expert advice America's most pressing issues. These scientists often used gender and sex difference to buttress their claims about racial difference, but the mechanisms by which they did so constantly shifted according to what was at stake in that specific historical moment. But throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their conclusions about human difference naturalized socio-political difference—and hierarchy—in America. For these scientists, the physical body both reflected and determined the character of the social body.

⁵⁸⁶ On the cultural politics of race and disease, see Keith Wailoo and Stephen Pemberton, The Troubled Dream of Genetic Medicine: Innovation and Ethnicity in Tay-Sachs, Cystic Fibrosis, and Sickle Cell Disease (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Graves, The Emperor's New Clothes, 173-192; and Keith Wailoo, Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race and Health (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). On race, genetics, and DNA, see Alan Goodman, Deborah Heath, and M. Susan Lindee, eds., Genetic Nature/Culture: Anthropology and Science Beyond the Two-Culture Divide (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Alper et al, eds., The Double-Edged Helix.

While we do not typically think about scientists as mediating citizenship, I would maintain that is precisely what ethnologists did. Many argued that African Americans were naturally servile, their bodies built for labor and their minds incapable of the reasoned thought needed for political involvement or leadership. Meanwhile, they touted the accomplishments of white men throughout history as the builders of great civilizations, the conquerors, the artists, the writers of political doctrine, poetry, and prose. In the antebellum and Reconstruction eras, scientists often compared the “lower races” to women, particularly in intellectual capacity; their similarities to each other, in conjunction with the vast chasm that separated both from white men, illustrated that neither women nor nonwhites were capable of political participation. In contrast, scientists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cast black men as a dangerous, menacing presence and white women as vulnerable outside the confines of domesticity, but this too functioned to underscore that neither had a place in American public life. White men alone had a special biological mandate to full citizenship. Some racial scientists insisted they were merely categorizing the races and avoided commenting directly on politically charged issues like slavery or the franchise. However, their characterizations of the races as fundamentally different nonetheless had broad implications recognizable to their audience as well. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, biology was destiny: different bodies inherently denoted different social roles. Throughout its reign, racial science reinforced the *de jure* and *de facto* definition of citizenship as white and male.

Indeed, from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century, racial science was an applied science. These scientists considered a range of political and social issues in their

work, including slavery, the Reconstruction amendments, education, sexual variance, and violent crime. They examined Civil War soldiers for both health defects and racial characteristics, penned letters to the Freedmen's Bureau and editorials to newspapers, gave public speeches on America's "race problem," testified in court in "sexual perversion" trials, served on vice commissions, treated (and mistreated) patients, and made recommendations on lynching. Racial science very much had a public life outside the scientific and medical establishment. As physician and prolific racial scientist G. Frank Lydston articulated in 1912, "the medical doctor is the best social doctor."⁵⁸⁷

Moreover, these scientists often saw themselves as reformers, upholding the natural order and curing society of its ills. While their claims seem anything but progressive today—some scientists' impassioned defenses of slavery, for example, or other scientists' advocacy of castration as a humane alternative to lynching at the turn of the century—it is vitally important to examine racial scientists in historical context, not to excuse them, but to understand the culture that produced them and the role they played in American society. Politicians and cultural commentators cited racial science to buttress and legitimize their claims and policies, while scientific theories about race manifested themselves in popular visual culture, from political cartoons to campaign posters. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racial science was mainstream science.

In many ways, this project has been as much a story about continuity over time as it was about change. Throughout the nineteenth century, science gained mainstream popularity and legitimacy in the United States, with many looking to the emerging

⁵⁸⁷ G. Frank Lydston, "Sex Mutilations as a Remedy for Social Ills: With Some of the Difficulties in the Way of the Practical Application of Eugenics to the Human Race," printed as a booklet for the New York Academy of Medicine (October 27, 1917), first published in New York Medical Journal, (April 6, 1912): 1.

sciences of race to explain and naturalize the social order. But the authority scientists held during their period had to be actively built and defended. Toward that end, scientists brought their expertise on race to bear on pressing issues in American society, but society was constantly changing. As we have seen, scientific ideas about race—and its intersection with other categories, like gender and sexuality—were constantly adapted to the specific social, cultural, and political contexts in which the scientists were working. But at the same time, several core beliefs about race remained relatively constant in science throughout this period: that human difference and destiny is located in the body and that differences of physicality denote social hierarchy.

This was also a story, then, about how categories of human difference are created, maintained, and contested and the role of science in that process. Throughout much of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, American scientists were engaged in a complex examination of race, sex, gender, and sexuality. These categories were mutually informing and constructive, with permeable boundaries perpetually in flux, and the body was the site on which they were built. Ultimately, they were not just categories of difference, however; they were, and often continue to be, categories of socio-political exclusion. Accordingly, this project, then, weaves together several scholarly concerns and historiographic strands, including the function of science in American society; the development of racial science as a field and its authority over sociopolitical issues and debates; the racialization of homosexuality and the concurrent rise of sexology; challenges to scientific claims about racial inferiority; the social construction and intersection of race, gender, and sexuality; and the body as a cultural entity and site of contestation. But while we as scholars generally talk about these categories as social

constructs, they continue to have undeniable cultural and material salience in America.

To borrow Judith Butler's language, this project is about bodies that matter.⁵⁸⁸

In the end, part of me shares Walter White's optimism that science has the potential to un-make race, just as it had lead the project of its construction in the nineteenth century. But at the same time, even scientific studies that seemingly strive to challenge racial difference often stop short of arguing that race is entirely a fiction, particularly those studies that reach a relatively wide audience. Even the pragmatic White must have been somewhat disappointed by the incomplete conversion of his scientist friend, Raymond Pearl, on matters of race. Likewise, as a tool for dismantling the house it helped to build, science remains an unfulfilled promise in the twenty-first century. Scientists are always a product of their own cultural context—even when they intend their work to challenge, subvert, or revolutionize the status quo—and in the United States, race continues to have considerable ideological power as framework for categorizing and dividing human beings. In the late eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson suggested that race was permanent and rooted in the body, though he expressed uncertainty as to precisely where; in the nineteenth century, some scientists embodied race in skulls, others in hair, and by the end of the century, in the sexual organs. Now, scientists are looking further still into the body, to microscopic DNA, for the essence—or fallacy—of race. The featured article in the December 2003 issue of Scientific American questioned whether there was any biological basis for the concept of race, for example. It

⁵⁸⁸ Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex" (New York: Routledge, 1993). Therein, she expands on the notion of gender performativity she first articulated in Gender Trouble (1990) by arguing that "'performance' [of sex/gender] is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance" (95).

pointed out that scientists had uncovered an enormous amount of genetic variation within racial groups as currently defined, not just across them, that only superficial physical traits such as eye or hair color could be genetically linked to those groups, and that racial categories shifted from one culture to the next. Ultimately, however, the article seemed to suggest that racial categorization in and of itself was not the problem, but that we needed additional or more precise categories and that racial groupings remained helpful for the treatment of diseases. Moreover, the issue's cover page underscores that the recent flurry of work on race, biology, and genetics may be driven at least in part by scientists' desire to reestablish their authority over a domain in which they had lost ground in the previous century. "Does race exist?" the title queried. "Science has the answer."⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁹ Michael J. Bamshad and Steve E. Olson, "Does Race Exist?," Scientific American (December 2003).

Appendix

Charting Racial Science: Data and Methodology

The charts and graphs in Chapters One and Two are based on systematic keyword searches of the Index-Catalogue of the National Library of Medicine (NLM). To chart changes in racial science between the antebellum period and the early nineteenth century, I searched this database for scientific texts on race. Now digitized, the Library's first catalog was initially published in 1880, and comprises materials dating from the fifteenth century to the early twentieth, including journal articles, dissertations and theses, monographs, pamphlets, and reports.⁵⁹⁰ I chose to use the National Library of Medicine, rather than a broader repository like the Library of Congress, because its stated purpose was to be a repository for medical and scientific publications and in the late nineteenth century, the NLM was the largest medical library in the world. The Index then, begun in 1880, reflects contemporary understandings of what was considered science or medicine, or at least of interest to scientists and physicians. Texts by prominent figures like Josiah Nott, Samuel Cartwright, and John Van Evrie, who are often labeled pseudoscientists today, were featured in the Index, another indicator that their contemporaries did not view them as such.

To demonstrate change over time, I conducted separate searches for each decade from 1830 through 1930, utilizing various racial terms in keyword searches, then went through each reference to determine, by its title and, when necessary, its subject heading, the text's primary focus, both in terms of theme and race or races. To be sure, the data that comprises these charts is intended not be comprehensive, but rather visually

representative of the changes I discuss in more detail. It should also be noted that such a method only reflects the primary focus of each text, as determined by the title and subject heading; only a thorough reading of every text referenced in the Index-Catalogue searches would be able to measure how often each of themes appear within the body of each texts, a method which would be near impossible when the number of citations at the turn-of-the-century measure in thousands.

The trends demonstrated by this measure are if anything more exaggerated when the content of representative texts from each time period are examined. For example, while twenty percent of the references from the 1880-1930 period focus on topics related to gender, sex, or sexuality, an examination of numerous texts from this period demonstrate that these themes were omnipresent within individual texts in the racial sciences during that period, even when those texts were ostensibly focused on another theme. Many of the texts that focused on racial taxonomy at the turn of the century used the degree of sexual differentiation within a race to distinguish it from other races, for instance. In other words, gender could be both a theme, or a paradigm or framework with which to approach another theme within the racial sciences.

Gender more often than not overlapped with another category of measure. However, as demonstrating changes in gender and sex within racial science is the central task of the first section of the dissertation, any reference that either focused solely on issues of sex/gender or took a gendered approach to another theme measured in the following approaches was counted toward the gender total, and each reference was counted toward only thematic column. I included within the parameters of the gender/sex

⁵⁹⁰ "About Index-Catalogue," National Library of Medicine,

category studies of diseases that were male or female specific, venereal diseases (since such studies tended to dwell much on sex and gender within afflicted populations), comparative studies (often using the brain or skull) between a specific race or races and women, discussions of race suicide and women's education and/or birth control, fertility, genital differences or abnormalities, assessments of masculinity across racial lines, childbirth, rape, and so on. Similarly, in the category of hybridity, I included any text dealing with race mixture (or the need to prevent it) or mixed race people themselves, as well as texts about other people who complicated racial binaries—studies of African-American albinos, for example.

Another change one sees in the racial sciences is that they become, quite literally, less black and white over time. Early ethnology tended to focus on blacks, whites, and to some extent, Native Americans, but over time, with increasing immigration, other races became more present in racial science. The charts demonstrate this change, but this too is an imperfect measure, for it simply measures all references and does not show that the texts on African-Americans, or on race in general, were more likely to be book length than those on other races, and also seemed to be more widely read within and outside the scientific establishment, based on the number of reprints, editions, and citations by political writers and social commentators. In addition, texts that were ostensibly focused on race in general, such as racial history and taxonomy texts would themselves often focus disproportionately on Africans and African-Americans, after briefly defining and describing the other races. That the preceding chapters then focus more in depth on scientific discourse about (and to a lesser extent by) African-Americans, or the dynamics

between blacks and whites, is a reflection of the nature of nineteenth and early twentieth century racial science itself. Furthermore, the low percentage of texts focused on whites is both misleading and telling, for it measures only those texts where whites were the focus, not those in which they were present in texts comparing whites to another race or races. In those texts, the reference was counted toward the non-white category, not to reinforce white as normative, but rather to demonstrate the extent to which whites were utilized as such in comparative studies by scientists during this period.

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- 1995-1999 **Bachelor of Arts**
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Employment and Positions

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- 2006-2008 **Head Research Assistant**
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