RACIAL SUBJECTS:

WRITING ON RACE IN AMERICA

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Taking Stock:

Counting by Race

Modern social subjects have become unself-conscious in establishing racial characteristics. They take for granted the recognition of racial difference: they make racial claims, assert racial truths, assess racial value—in short, create (fabricate) racial knowledge. In this sense, racial knowledge is integral to the common sense, to the articulation, of modernity's self-understanding.

Knowledge production, and this is especially true for social knowledge, does not take place independent of social circumstance. The production of knowledge is sustained and delimited by political economy and by culture—by its own and by that of the society more generally. Productive practices act upon the epistomological categories invoked, informing the knowledge thus produced, imparting assumptions, values, and goals. These categories that frame knowing, in turn, order their users' terms

of articulation, fashioning content of the known and constraining what and how members of the social order at hand think and what they think about. The grounds of knowledge, accordingly, offer "foundations" for the constitution of social power (Habermas 1988, 272).

What I am calling "racial knowledge" is defined by two principal features. First, such knowledge assumes as its own the modes and premises of the established scientific fields, especially anthropology, natural history, and biology, but also of sociology, politics, and economics. This scientific cloak imparts to racial knowledge seemingly formal character and universality, authority, and legitimation. Racial knowledge acquires its apparent authority by parasitically mapping its modes of expression according to the formal authority of the scientific discipline it mirrors. It can do this—and this is its second constitutive feature—because it has been historically integral to the emergence of these authoritative scientific fields. Race has been a basic categorical object, in some cases a founding focus, of scientific analysis.

A few instances, both historical and contemporary, of this interweaving of race and science will suffice. There exists, for one, a long-standing partnership in the production of racialized social relations and exclusions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries between the state and racializing eugenic science throughout Europe, the United States, and Latin America. More recently, there has been a rearticulation of these racialized presuppositions, not only in terms of sociobiology but more insidiously (because of its more direct practical effects) in celebration of the possibilities for social engineering of the new biotechnologies.[1]

Historically, this racialized concern with the body is anchored in physical anthropology, the racial presuppositions of which have assumed the status of "givens" in the field. The seeming

inescapability of physical anthropology's racialized presuppositions was brought home to me recently. The university that pays my way sponsored a colloquium series on "The Origin of the Human Species." I was struck by how deeply the participants, all renowned proponents of competing theories about human origins, have assumed the racialized language of eighteenth-century anthropology, renewing the commitment to (mis)measure human skulls as a way of determining racial difference, and endorsing once again facile presumptions that the difference in size between a Wilt Chamberlain (the 7 ft. 2 in. black basketball legend) and a Willie Shoemaker (the 4 ft. 11 in. white champion jockey) is somehow racially significant. In lieu of an extended rebuttal, I will simply ask: What, then, is to be made of the difference in size between Bill Walton (the 7 ft. 1 in. white basketball legend) and Tyrone Bogues (the 5 ft. 3 in. current black basketball dynamo)? Carleton Coon's legacy has a longer reach than I am want to leave unchallenged.

Epistemologically, power is exercised in naming and in evaluating. In naming or refusing to name, existence is recognized or refused, meaning and value are assigned or ignored, people and things are elevated or rendered invisible. Once defined, symbolic order has to be maintained, serviced, extended, operationalized. In this sense, the racial Other is nominated into existence. As Said makes clear in his book *Orientalism* (1978, 31–49), the Other is constituted through the invention of projected knowledge. The practices of naming and knowledge construction tend to deny any meaningful autonomy to those so named and imagined, extending over them power, control, authority, and domination.

As I have suggested, science is implicated deeply in this process of racial nomination. At a more practical and direct level, the U.S. Census has served to weave racial categorization into the social fabric, blending scientific strands with public policy threads. After all, the census is an exercise in social naming, in nominating

into existence. The wiser governing powers appear about those they nominate as subject races, the less will their administrative rule require raw force. Racial governmentality thus requires information about supposed racial natures: about demography and economy, housing and education. Information thus has two meanings: detailed facts about racial nature and the forming of racial character. The census has been a formative governmental technology in the service of the state to fashion racialized knowledge—to articulate the categories, to gather data, and to put them to work. Individuals and interest groups, in the United States and elsewhere, have lobbied the state regarding the promotion or dismissal of some racial category, thereby mediating or delimiting the hegemonic imposition and diffusion of state categories. Here, the state agency serves, as Stuart Hall and his collaborators (1978, 57–62) put it, as "primary definers." Individual or interest group intervention serve at best as "secondary."[2]

FORMALIZING RACIAL GOVERNMENTALITY

Racial governmentality is defined and administered by means of forms (pieces of administrative paper). Bureaucratic forms reproduce as they reflect racial identities, distributing them throughout the culture. Forms accordingly are both about form and content, ordering as they inform, as they call for and proffer data. Because form and content are so seamlessly merged in the bureaucratic document, forms offer to modern state governmentality—to bureaucratic rationality—its ideal technology. The positivity of data collection hides from view (in the form of the form) the axiology of presumed value, those suppositions of order and determination; it covers them up in the name of the practical and the given. And this capacity to veil presupposed value is enabled by the apparatus of forms through their archi-te(x)ture, so to speak, for the form embeds its determining and shaping capacity behind the surface positivity of its projected mandates: to collect data, to codify, to structure sameness for the sake of policy and

common practice. In this sense, forms are the concrete product and application of the applied sciences of "Man" that emerged as the new episteme in the eighteenth century.

Thus, the form is in*form*ational, reproductive of a social formation as it institutes and applies its assumptions. The form speaks in behalf of repeatable social practices (*administrology*) by offering data in support. To the extent that the data—the field of collectible information—can be *form*alized (and by virtue of being in*form*ation it is already to some extent formalizable), the knowledge they purport to re-present acquires the status—the authority—and so the legitimation of science. It is with reason that statistics and forms emerge more or less coterminously. Forms presuppose the givenness, the absolute positivity, of the data to which the form extends logic, order, structure, coherence—in short, *form*.

*Form*al identity is identity conceived, manufactured, and fabricated in and through forms. It is rigid, static, at least insofar as it is intra-form(al), limited in its life to the parameters of the form and the bureaucratic rationality that the form informs. The form, and the identity prompted and promoted by the form, is regulatory and regulative. The form furnishes uni*form*ity—regularity, repeatability, reiterability, predictability—to identity, rendering it accordingly accessible to administration. In short, it provides governmentality with everything that amounts to knowledge in the scientific-technical mode necessary to administration. The form is the technology of scientific management par excellence.

The form offers insurance against the risk of un*form*ed—that is, an*archi*cal—social practice and life, a hedge against (or at least a circumscription of) future uncertainties and open-ended possibilities by restricting unfettered possibility to the predictability of inductive probability. Unformed anarchy is regulated by the constraints of the form. Conformity and the uniformity that are both its products and presuppositions are manufactured by

silencing and rendering invisible or placing outside the margins of the form the data of pure heterogeneity.

In the case of identities, the de*form*ation of identity created or crafted through the technology of the form does not necessarily turn on a (philosophically or scientifically) realist understanding of identity—that is, that form(al) identity fails to capture the fixed and transhistorical truth of lived or experienced identity, its irreducible heterogeneity. Rather form(al) identity necessarily presupposes the static nature, the unchangingness, of identity as such, and so freezes what is historically in process, in trans*form*ation. So form(al) identity—and this is especially true for identity fabricated through census forms—always lags behind the more transitory nature of lived identity. The form is always already too late. For by the time the form appears, lived identity has altered; or it captures only a partial (a limited and biased) aspect of that lived identity while silencing all other aspects; or, again, even having captured something of that lived identity, the form fails to respond to transformational pressures because they are unrecognizable outside the parameters of the *form*alization that the form entails.

The form, then, like those employed in the census that speak to identity, always lags behind the complex negotiations of identities and (self-)identifications in everyday experience, even as it serves in part to shape and to fix those identities and identifications. In the case of the census count, there is a commitment to re*form*ulate categories better to capture the power of the name—to reflect interests, to shape identities, and to fix identification anew. To open up the form to renewably open-ended self-identification would quite literally undermine—de*form*—the very nature of the form, its administrative purpose, for it would at once remove the categorically reiteratable in*form*ation—the identity of information via categorization—that it is the mandate of the form to make available. Categorization extends

to otherwise randomly collected data its identity, trans*form*ing discrete bits of data into in*form*ation.

The U.S. Census serves, and was initially designed to serve, state interests, functioning to furnish information crucial to state revenue collection, and to distributional and voting purposes. But the census has also always had an ideological mandate; namely, to articulate, if not to create, a national profile, a mapping of the nation's demographic contours. I examine the practical intersection of social science, state-directed social policy, and racialized discourse by focusing on the ways that U.S. Census counts throughout their history have helped to fashion and to fix the racializing of the U.S. body politic. The census has worked thus to draw racial lines around and within the society, reifying as it reflects prevailing racialized common sense.

TAKING STOCK

A national census, by all accounts, is a stocktaking of the country's human assets, of the state's population capital. Accordingly, the census uses social science both functionally and ideologically. Functionally, it employs social science (and puts social scientists to work) to observe, define, oversee, and assess shifts in population (Conk 1987, 159). In this sense, the census promotes a sophisticated intersection of space and time. It maps the geographical contours of population distribution, fashioning a social understanding strongly predicated on historical records. So, ironically, a census is always too late, tied to past reports of social division and diffusion, presupposing categories crafted from the material of past records (Cohn 1987, 231–32).[3]

In the United States, the national census is as old as the republic itself, mandated decennially by the Constitution primarily for the purposes of voting district apportionment and of distribution of federal resources among states. But beyond these crucial administrative mandates, the census has functioned also to secure recognition and material benefits for groups otherwise ignored.

Ideologically, the census is a kind of "collective self-portrait" that serves to invent and to renew—to reimagine—the national identity (Starr 1987, 19). The U.S. Census has always racialized this national image: both in its imagined (pre)formation and in its statistical (re)creation, the racial Us and Other are produced and defined by the census, as it reflects and refines the racialized social formation.

In the name of an objectivity that claims simply to document or to reflect, the census of racialized social categories and groups purports to count without judging, to photograph without transforming. The census reflects the racializing categories of social formation that it nevertheless at once reifies, which it reproduces as it creates and cements as it naturalizes. This process of objectified nomination thus fixes (at least temporarily and tenuously) what are at best racial fabrications, for racial categories are at once creations from whole cloth and threads integral to—constitutive of—the prevailing sociocultural fabric. The snapshot of the national profile freezes momentarily into givens, thereby objectifying, the racializing categories it at once assumes and fashions. This body count, authorized by state mandate and its legal instrumentality, thus offers racialized categories the mark of respectability. It thus enables these indices of otherness, apartness, and fracture to extend over, to seep silently into, the social concepts and categories of the nation that are not so straightforwardly racial, especially those of class.[4] A national census profiles the laboring classes, mapping their regional availability, providing a snapshot of capital's labor needs.

The administrative mandate of the U.S. Census was racialized (just as it was engendered) from its inception. In 1787, the Constitution required the census to distinguish between "free white males," "free white females," "all other free persons" (by sex and color), "untaxed Indians," and "slaves." "The slave," presumed silently to be black, was defined as three-fifths a person for the purposes of resource allocation.[5] (Given that the Declaration of Independence opens by declaring all "men" equal, this implies, if it did not assume, that slaves—black slaves, to emphasize the point—were assumed not to be "men," that is, not fully human.)

It may help to group the racial categories employed in the two hundred years of census taking in this country into five periods. The first period runs from 1790 to 1840 during which the initial categories are baldly fashioned, framing the premises for all future conceptualization. The period offers no instructions as to the categories' definition or scope. The second period runs from 1850 to 1880 during which precise categories were streamlined as a reflection and in the expressed service of (racial) science. The third period spans from 1890 to 1920 during which categories first covered all of settled America (Lee 1993, 76) and responded to the significant thrusts of (im)migration. The fourth period covers 1930 to 1970 during which racial distinction in the United States began to proliferate against (or in spite of) the assimilationist grain. The fifth period includes the U.S. Census counts of 1980 and 1990 significant for transforming the presumptive basis of category formation from "objectively" given constructs to "self-identifying" ones.[6]

The first formal U.S. Census, in 1790, employed the initial constitutional categories, later qualified only by age for whites in the counts of 1800 and 1810. In 1820, the category of "Free Colored Person" was introduced and qualified by gender and age, though the age distinctions differed slightly from those categorized as "white."[7] In 1830, age categories for "whites" were multiplied, and gender and age distinctions were introduced for "slaves" reflecting those of the "Free Colored Persons," even though "slaves" were listed prior to the latter category. The only novelty introduced in 1840 was to invert in the inventory the order of appearance of "Free Colored Person" and "Slaves." Yet, as more black people gained freedom, the census was invoked

Figure 1. Census Categories from 1790 to 1990
(Compiled with the assistance of Barbara Lammi)

1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890
Free White Males & Females	Free White Males & Females	Free White Males & Females	Free White Males & Females	Free White Persons	Free White Persons	White	White	White	White	White
All Other Free Persons, Except Indians Not Taxed	All Other Free Persons, Except Indians Not Taxed	All Other Free Persons, Except Indians Not Taxed	All Other Persons, Except Indians Not Taxed							
Slaves	Slaves	Slaves		Slaves	Slaves					
			Free Colored Persons	Free Colored Persons Gender Age	Free Colored Persons					
						Black (B)	Black	Black	Black	Black/Negro
						Mulatto (M)	Mulatto	Mulatto	Mulatto	Mulatto
										Quadroon
										Octoroon
								Chinese		Chinese
										Japanese
								Indian		Indian

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
Black (Negro or Negro Descent)	Black	Black	Negro	Negro	Negro	Negro	Negro or Black	Black (or Negro)	Black or Negro
	Mulatto	Mulatto							
			Mexican						
Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
			Filipino	Filipino	Filipino	Filipino	Filipino	Filipino	Filipino
			Hindu	Hindu					
			Korean	Korean			Korean	Korean	Korean
								Vietnamese	Vietnamese
								Asian Indian	Asian Indian
								Guamanian	Guamanian
								Samoan	Samoan
						Hawaiian	Hawaiian	Hawaiian	Hawaiian
						Pan Hawaiian			
Indian	Indian	Indian	Indian	Indian	American Indian	American Indian	Indian (Amer.)	Indian (Amer.)	Indian (Amer.)
						Aleut		Aleut	Aleut
						Eskimo		Eskimo	Eskimo
	Other	Other	Other Races	Other Races	Other Race	Etc. (Inc. Asian Indians)	Other (Specify Race)	Other	Other Race
									Other API

ideologically to shore up the institution of enslavement. Thus, as William Petersen notes (1987, 230, n. 90), the 1840 U.S. Census "measured" insanity and idiocy, claiming to show the percentage of blacks suffering both conditions to be greater in the North than in the South. These "facts" were then used to license the argument that though blacks were at ease with slavery, they were clearly incapable of adjusting to freedom. The argument and the data supposedly supporting it were vigorously challenged by Edward Jarvis, a Massachusetts physician supported by the Massachusetts Medical Society and the American Statistical Association, who demanded that the many miscalculations be formally corrected. Instead, John Calhoun, then Secretary of State and so in charge of the census, censored the critique and persisted in invoking the figures in support of slavery. A separate study conducted by Dr. James McCune Smith for a convention of free black Northerners found that eight towns in Maine where thirty insane black people were claimed to be institutionalized had no black residents at all. Moreover, Aptheker (1974) reveals that where the census had reported 133 black patients in the mental institution of Worcester, Massachusetts, they were all white, consistent with the nineteenth century tendency to identify idiocy and blackness.[8]

Instructions to census takers were initiated in 1820, though instructions regarding race first appeared for the 1850 census. Lacking explicit definitions of the racial categories, the census relied in its first half century on establishing the racial body count upon the "*common* sense" judgments, the (pre)supposed views, of its all-white enumerators. Persons were racially named, the body politic measured, and resources distributed based on prevailing racial presumptions and mandated fractional assessments. The society was literally marked in black and white.

From 1850 on, increasingly fine distinctions began to appear for those considered "nonwhite," and the growing complexity of

these distinctions seemed to require issuance for enumerators of instruction schedules concerning the racial categories. Thus, in 1850, under the leadership of U.S. Census Superintendent, J. D. B. De Bow (for whom "the negro was created essentially to be a slave"), enumerators were asked to mark the color of "Free inhabitants." They were to do so by leaving the space under the heading "Color" blank for "whites," while "carefully" marking others as "B" (for "Black") or "M" (for "Mulatto"). Slaves were to be counted separately, and their color indicated also.

These categories informed a significant Californian case, *People v. Hall*, in 1854. In 1850, the Californian legislature had passed (in an act regulating California criminal proceedings) a clause prohibiting the court testimony of a black, mulatto, or American Indian person directed against a white defendant. Hall, a white man, had been convicted of murder because of witness testimony by a Chinese man. Hall appealed his conviction on the basis that the Chinese belonged with American Indians to a common Mongoloid race, and so the testimony of the Chinese witness was inadmissible. Appealing to the Bering Straits theory of American Indian migration and invoking the most vituperative antiblack rhetoric, the California Supreme Court upheld Hall's appeal and vacated his conviction (Renoso 1992, 833). The heart (not to mention the mind) of whiteness, it seems, is naturally set apart from the heart and mind of an othered and singular "nonwhiteness."

In 1870, further distinctions were introduced into the census: "Chinese" (largely because of the importation of coolie labor in the West) and "Indian" (marking the policy shift to removing American Indians to reservations). The new instructions cautioned enumerators to take special care in reporting "Mulatto (including quadroons, octoroons, and all persons having any perceptible trace of African blood)." The reason? "Important scientific results depend upon the correct determination of this

class." By the count of 1880, the request for information about "Indians" had become more specific. The instructions for 1880 specified Indian division between tribes, and insisted on listing whether the person was a "full-blood" of the tribe or mixed with another. If mixed with "white," the person had to be marked "W" (a concession reflecting the presupposed closeness in the "great chain of being" between "Europeans" and "Indians"); if mixed with "black," he or she had to be marked "B"; and if mixed with "mulatto," he or she had to be marked "M" (indicating the overriding presumption of "black" otherness). Tribal adoptees were to be racially marked as "W. A." ("white adopted") or "B. A." ("black or mulatto adopted"). Moreover, enumerators were instructed not to accept answers that they "know or have reason to believe are false," indicating the continued power of racial definition vested in the hands of all-white enumerators.[9]

The instructions for the 1890 count reflected not only the rapid diversification of the U.S. population, but the intensifying administrative concern (in the face of this expanding diversity) with racial distinction, hierarchy, and imposed division. Thus, while the categories for "white," "Chinese," and "Indian" remained unchanged, explicit and superficial distinctions were introduced between "black," "mulatto," "quadroon," and "octoroon." "Black" was to refer to any person with "three-fourths or more black blood"; "mulatto" referred to those having "from three-eighths to five-eighths black blood"; "quadroon" to those persons having "one-fourth black blood"; and "octoroon" to those "having one-eighth or any trace of black blood."

In 1900, these distinctions began to collapse in the wake of the widespread social belief that "black" was any person "with a single drop of black blood" (Davis 1991, 5). So "black" was indicated on the instructions as "a negro or of negro descent." Ten years later the category "other" was first introduced. Anyone not falling into the established census categories was to be

marked as "other," and his or her race (assuming of course that it was identifiable) to be listed there. The reintroduced definitions to distinguish "black" from "mulatto" shifted. They began visibly to reflect the struggle to balance blackness with the self-evident effects of miscegenation. Thus, the category "black" now "include[d] all persons who are *evidently* full-blooded negroes," while "negro include[d] all persons having some proportion or *perceptible* trace of negro blood" (my emphases). In keeping with the common comprehension of race but serving also to cement it, race was conceived (in a confused mix of the literal and the metaphorical) as blood, a confusion that necessitated reducing the basis of distinction between "black" and "negro" to nothing more than the enumerators' perception. This necessary, and necessarily reductive, recourse to appearance in racial designation predates the 1950 Population Registration Act of the South African apartheid state by almost half a century.

No changes were made to the racial categories for 1920. However, the 1924 National Origins Act, strongly promoted by the eugenics movement in the United States and sponsored by Senator Albert Johnson, president of the Eugenics Research Association at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, cut immigration. Immigrants from those countries already represented in the U.S. was cut to 2 percent of their numbers already residing in the U.S., as determined by the 1890 U.S. Census. Difficulties soon arose in determining the figures on national origins, so that by 1929 a flat cap of 150,000 immigrants per annum was introduced, 71 percent of whom were to be from Britain, Germany, and the rest of Europe. Japanese immigration was restricted completely (Gossett 1965, 406-07).

By 1930, the prevailing institutional mandates of racialized segregation and immigration restriction had prompted seemingly precise specifications for reporting race. Enumerators were required to enter as "Negro" any person of "mixed white and

Negro blood" irrespective of how small "the percentage of Negro blood." Moreover, a person "part Indian" and "part Negro" was to be listed as "Negro unless the Indian blood predominated and the person is generally accepted as Indian in the community." Similarly, someone of "mixed white and Indian blood" was to be counted as "Indian, except where the percentage of Indian blood" was deemed very small or the person was generally considered white in the community. In general, any "racially mixed person" with white parentage was to be designated according to the race of the parent who was not white; by contrast, "mixtures of colored races" were to be racially designated from the father's race, "except Negro-Indian." For the first time, also, "Mexican" was introduced as a separate *racial* category, and defined as "all persons born in Mexico, or having parents born in Mexico, and who are definitely not white, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese." In the next count, however, partly in response to objections by both the Mexican government and the U.S. State Department, "Mexicans" were to be listed as "white" unless they were "definitely Indian or some race other than white." While the concern by 1940 with racial purity may have been waning in the wake of Aryanism, the concern with the growing ethnocoloring of America seemed to demand a way of keeping whites separate and distinct.

This trend toward introducing ethnoracial categories while looking for ways to maintain a majority of whiteness continued unabated through the 1970 census. Accordingly, in 1950 the category of "Filipino" was introduced under the section on "Race," while American Indians were listed according to "degree of Indian blood: full blood; half to full; quarter to half; less than one quarter." The mid-century romance with the automobile prompted these odd metaphors, reminiscent of gasoline gauges, reducing in this instance American Indians to objects. This calculus was presumably tied to the New Deal undertaking to

reestablish tribal administrative authority. Blood counts would provide the insidious technology for determining the range of bureaucratic control: the "purer" the "blood" the less assimilable and so the more they were to suffer governmental imposition. To illustrate just how far the concern with the racialized body count was carried, enumerators were warned, in an implicit nod to the intersection of race, class, and gender distinction, that "knowledge of the housewife's race tells nothing of the maid's race."

In 1960, new categories were added to the already accepted categories of "white," "Negro," "American Indian," "Japanese," "Chinese," and "Filipino": "Hawaiian," "Pan Hawaiian," "Aleut," and "Eskimo." The earlier addition of "Other" (that is, un/specified racial categories) was replaced by "etc.," as though the imperative to racialize had assumed the naturalism of iterative ordinariness. Instructions to enumerators stated that "white" was to include "Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, or other persons of Latin descent" unless such persons were "definitely Negro, Indian, or some other race." Southern European and Near Eastern nationals similarly were to be classified as "white," while Asian Indians were to be deemed "Other."

By 1970, "Pan Hawaiian," "Aleut," and "Eskimo" were eliminated from the section on "Race," but "Korean" was added and "Other" was reintroduced with the explicit instruction to specify race. Those of supposedly "Latin" descent were asked to specify their place of origin or specify their descent as either "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," "Cuban," "Central or South American," "Other Spanish," or "none of these." At the same time, those responding to the question of race as "Chicano," "La Raza," "Mexican American," "Moslem," or "Brown" were to be classified as "white," whereas respondents listing "Brown (Negro)" would be considered "Negro" or "Black." Even as the census had begun to reflect the insistence of black-consciousness that "Negro" give way to "Black," there was an insistence upon the loaded distinction

between brown and black, between (in census language from 1930 to 1960) "non-Negro" and "Negro." Somehow the so-called "browning of America" was lost in reaffirming the long-standing distinction between white and black, a sign perhaps of things to come. Andrew Hacker (1991) may yet be right, though for reasons he scarcely touches upon, that in the United States there are "Two Nations, Black and White, Separate, Hostile and Unequal." The seeming liberalization and loosening of racial classification that began tentatively in the 1970s (was it ever more rigorous?) was nevertheless overshadowed by the continuing imposition of narrowed racial designation—most notably, as "white" or "black"—standing silently behind the nuance of racial self-naming.

These transformations in race designation were carried forward into the 1980 U.S. Census in a way that altogether undermines any crosscensus comparisons. Most important, the census introduced the standard of racial *self*-identification that had begun in the early 1970s to be assumed in almost all fifty states. For census purposes, however, the injunction to declare oneself racially as one chooses was circumscribed. Respondents were still required to choose from *given* designations, a mix of traditionally racial, ethnic, and national categories. Thus, the primary categories of the 1970 U.S. Census were supplemented by the addition of "Vietnamese," "Guamanian," and "Samoan," while "Eskimo" and "Aleut" were reintroduced. "Black" became a primary designation, though "Negro" was retained as an alternate reading. Similarly, those previously identified as of "Spanish" origin or descent could now also choose to identify themselves as "Hispanic" (but notably not Chicano or Latino). To all of this was added a general question about ancestry, requesting information about ethnic/national descent. Included among the examples cited were "Afro-American," "Jamaican," "Nigerian," "Venezuelan," and "Ukrainian." Where "mixed race" persons had

difficulty placing themselves, enumerators were instructed to report the mother's race/group, and where this was unacceptable, to list the first race cited. For the Spanish-origin question, if someone reported mixed parentage with only the second parent identifiable as "Spanish/Hispanic" (e.g., Italian-Cuban), enumerators were instructed to void the "Spanish/Hispanic" designation.

Whatever happened to the right of self-identification to *refuse* to identify oneself racially? The denial of such a right implies (if it does not presuppose) that race is a primary, indeed, a primal category of human classification, one so natural to the human condition that it can be ignored only on pain of self-denial. Underlying the imperative of racial self-identification is the presumption of naturalism: one is expected to identify oneself as what one "naturally" is (Goldberg 1993b). The democracy of self-naming is undermined by the authoritarianism of imposed identity and identification. Those resisting literally become the new "Others."

This apparent paradox of racial self-naming highlights the tensions faced by any nation committed to a racial numeration. The technology of counting can impose categories of identification or it can allow completely open self-identifying responses. The former will furnish a set of consistent categories and a statistically manipulable data base. The latter won't. Nevertheless, at best, the former will seriously undercount; at worst, it will have little objective reference to the nuances of people's felt identities. For example, on the basis of national origin and native language reports in the 1930 census, there were an estimated 200,000 Spanish speakers in New Mexico (roughly half that state's population). But the census count in 1930 listed only 61,960 for the category "Mexican." For the overwhelming majority, the category did not apply.[10] Unfortunately, unrestricted self-identifying responses will be statistically useless, for there is

unlikely to be any categorical uniformity. Social identities, in other words, belie simplicity, and bureaucratic-statistical requirements (elevated by managed multiculturalisms) simply serve to enforce the racializing imperative of the census.

In the most recent census, these categories and their ordering again were redefined, if not exactly refined. Thus, the 1990 form asked respondents, under the heading "Race," whether they were "White," "Black or Negro," "American Indian," "Eskimo," "Aleut," or "Asian or Pacific Islander (API)," or "Other race (list)." "API" was specified as including "Chinese," "Filipino," "Hawaiian," "Korean," "Vietnamese," "Japanese," "Asian Indian," "Samoan," "Guamanian," and "Other API" (which was presumed to include "Cambodian," "Tongan," "Laotian," "Hmong," "Thai," and "Pakistani"). There was a separate question for those declaring "Spanish/Hispanic origin," reflecting the political history of nervous uncertainty (if not outright insecurity) over the racial identity of those so self-identifying. Respondents under this category were asked to distinguish whether they were "Mexican, Mexican-American, or Chicano," "Puerto Rican," "Cuban," or "Other Spanish/Hispanic." The latter included "Argentinean," "Colombian," "Dominican," "Nicaraguan," "Salvadorean," and "Spaniard." Although these categories were listed as "racial," they included a confused and confusing intersection of those deemed traditionally racial with national and ethnic configurations. The conceptual and political tensions in and between the categories was exacerbated by the appearance of a final question asking all respondents to list their "ancestry or ethnic origin." Examples on the form included "German," "Afro-American," "Croatian," "Cape Verdean," "Dominican," "Cajun," "French Canadian," "Jamaican," "Korean," "Lebanese," "Mexican," "Nigerian," "Ukrainian," and so forth.

These elastic racial, ethnic, and national characteristics mean, as the U.S. Census Bureau (1990, 2) readily admits, that "Data on race and Hispanic origin ... are not totally comparable between censuses."[11] Thus, the comparative group size of "Whites," "Blacks," "Hispanics," "Indians," and "Asian or Pacific Islanders" is misleading, precisely because the categories include nonracial subdivisions; while affirmative action policies based on these numbers will have unfair outcomes or be open to odious manipulation. The publicity in the 1980s surrounding the movie *Soul Man*, about the faking of ethnic identity to benefit from an affirmative action program, portrays one such move.

Categorical self-identification provides opportunities for movement by groups as well. Some native Hawaiians want to reclassify their group status from "API" to "American Indian," a concern motivated by solidarity, common struggle, and historical accuracy, but also because "Some colleges and the Department of Education have minority scholarships that you get through your status as Native American."[12] Moreover, though claims based on crosscensus comparisons may properly indicate population trends, they also may not. For instance, explaining the doubling of the "Asian and Pacific Islander population" in a decade strictly in terms of "a high level of immigration" may be misleading precisely because some of those counted as API in 1990 were not so counted in 1980. Indeed, no separate API category was included in the 1980 U.S. Census, only many of the ethnic/national subdivisions grouped under this rubric in 1990 (all of the categories in 1990 exemplifying "Other API" were missing in 1980). Some may object that nothing much is added by the introduction of the general API category. However, its presence at a time of heightened concern over group identity no doubt prompts the possibility of a self-identification otherwise discouraged—that is, silenced.

Similarly, from 1980 to 1990, there was a projected increase of 53 percent in "Hispanic origin population (of any race)." Part of this increase can be attributed to the introduction of new explicit

subcategories like "Colombian," "Dominican," and so on. By the same token, the increases in the "American Indian" population (including "Eskimo" and "Aleut") of 70 percent from 1970 to 1980, and of 40 percent from 1980 to 1990, turned not only on categorical introductions but upon the reemergence of "Indian-consciousness," the drive to reidentify with Indianness in the face of the assimilative and integrative imperatives of hegemonic U.S. culture. Accordingly, the reported increase of 41 percent from 1982 to 1992 in the number of "Hispanic" doctorates (compared with a 19 percent drop in doctorates for blacks) fails to taken into account the related increase in the number of people primarily identifying themselves as "Hispanic," an identification prompted both by the emphatic appearance of the administrative category and the general social emphasis on ethnic particularity.[13]

The shifting politics of (self-)identification prompted and reified by the history of the census raise deep difficulties for any social science relying unproblematically on crosscensus population group comparisons from census reports on "Race and Hispanic Origin." Davis, Haub, and Willette (1988, 3), for example, report more than a 200 percent increase of "Hispanics" in the United States from 1950 to 1980, projecting estimates for the nonexistent data from 1950, 1960, and 1970. Similarly, Linda Chavez (1991, 104) acknowledges that "Hispanic" earnings in the southwestern United States in 1989 were still 57 percent of non-Hispanic earnings, just as they had been forty years earlier in 1959 (found by comparing earnings of Mexican-origin males in 1959 with that of "Hispanics" in 1989). Thus researchers can create a history by estimating the count for a category which did not exist at the time. In this sense, "Hispanics" is the only group in the United States fashioned retroactively, as a political response to a problem of political economy, namely, the command of economic resources, the demand for political representation, and the projection of a unified consumer body. ("Asian

Americans" perhaps fits this account also, though in slightly different form and for different purposes.) The mix of legal and bureaucratic technologies reduces the nuance of experienced identity to the certitude of categorical identity. For instance, Teja Arboleda's maternal grandparents are European, his father's mother African-American, and his father's father Filipino/Chinese. He is listed as white on his birth certificate. In responding to the 1990 Census, he refused to complete the ethnic/racial section. On the basis of his name, skin, and hair color an enumerator marked him as "Hispanic."[14] So much for the (pre)supposed correlation between race and I.Q. driving the agenda of *The Bell Curve*.

While crosscensus comparisons concerning racial data need to be approached with analytical sensitivity, such comparisons need not be dismissed out of hand. William Julius Wilson (1989), for example, in his justly influential study, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, uses data reliant on the race reported in various census reports. Wilson is concerned mostly with black-white comparisons, and though the census racial categories concerning blacks shift over time, the shift is largely within the category and so the effect on black-white comparisons is minimized. Wilson is generally sensitive, also, to nuances in the category "Hispanic," differentiating it from data reported under the category "Spanish-origin" (though he equates a U.S. Census Bureau report on urban poverty based on 1970 Census "Spanish origin" figures with 1980 figures on "Hispanics") (Wilson 1989, 58–59; also see 23, 31, 37, 65). Enough, however, about these administrative technologies. The underlying question is why we are concerned at all with counting by race.

COUNTING BY RACE

This line of analysis demonstrates that one should be deeply wary of drawing any intracensus implications based on racial categories. The categories are figments of an overrationalized

bureaucratic imagination, and their implications are likely insidious. The 1990 Census, for example, reports that the population of "Hispanic origin" is greatest in the South and Western United States (California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Florida). But people collected under "Hispanic origin" in the southwestern states differ, often dramatically, from those in the southeast and in the large eastern cities like Washington, Philadelphia, and New York. Indeed, interests, culture, almost anything, causes racial identification counts of "Hispanics" to differ regionally. It is for this reason, perhaps, that contemporary census documents, in speaking of racial categories, commonly refer to "Race *and* Hispanic Origin" (my emphasis). The category "Hispanic" is an imposed one: it others as it unites, marginalizes as it generalizes, stereotypes as it aggregates. It purports to categorize identity for an entire subcontinent (and beyond) in the age of globalization and flexible accumulation, just as it seeks to create—to fabricate in the economic imaginary—a supersubject, a target market that abnegates the specificity of its constituents. It is a category that becomes fixed in the public mind—becomes a given of common sense—through sociostatistical profiles, the "objective" realism of numbers, and the reality of tables, charts, and comparisons.[15]

More insidiously, these racialized politics of numbers and the numerical politics of racial naming and placing must be comprehended in the context of their primary legislative mandate. The point of the census in U.S. history was to manage effective resource distribution and voting access. These economic and political mandates in the United States have always been deeply racialized, and the apparent contemporary democratizing of census self-identification serves only to hide from view newly framed racialized tensions that remain as managed as they always were. "Hispanics" may catch up with "Blacks" in their percentage of the U.S. population by the end of the decade and may pass them by the first decade of the next century. But this "fact" is as much a fabrication of racial designation as it is of demographic growth.

"Hispanic" was crafted as a nonracial term to cut across racial designations, yet in its generality it has served, and serves, as a new racial category.

Racializing the body count in this way has, as always, significant implications for voting rights. The voting rights of blacks are now guaranteed (in more or less complex ways) by the Fifteenth Amendment (1871), and by the 1965 Voting Rights Act and its 1982 amendment. One of the ways to dilute blacks' voting rights, perhaps one of the only permissible alternatives now, is to set them against "other" statistically dominant "minorities," minorities whose racial configurations are precisely ambiguous. Blacks are marked hegemonically as politically and socially liberal (and in the 1980s liberal came to be cast as literally un-American); whereas those configured as "Hispanic" (and perhaps also Asian American) are often cast as socially (and perhaps economically) conservative.[16] In the equally fabricated tensions between liberals and conservatives that characterize U.S. politics, the drive to bring those referenced as "Hispanic" under the "right" wing is under way (just as the New Deal and Great Society Democrats sought to capture the black vote). A social statistics that purports to report the truth underpins the new racialized dynamics. This new dynamic may be fueled, paradoxically, by the very instrument designed to democratize the social body count, namely, racial self-identification.

A key implication drawn by the state from the Civil Rights Movement and independence struggles of the 1960s is the importance of self-naming. Imposing names on groups and individuals was a significant social technology of control under cultural colonialism and racialized domination. The formal introduction of self-identification as the standard of group definition in the 1970s reflected the apparent drive to democratize sociopolitical institutions in the United States. Nevertheless, the parameters of self-definition have never been open-ended, for the

state has always furnished the range of available, credible, and reliable—that is, of licensed and so permissible—categories in which self-definition could occur. Simultaneously in the 1970s, the overwhelmingly white-faced image of the United States was becoming dramatically shaded. There is a sense, then, in which the nominal politics of Hispanicizing is serving to soften, if not to undermine, this racial transformation. In census terms, "Hispanic" is only ambiguously a racial category, placed alongside, as an additive to, "Race." It is thus, at once, racialized and deracialized. "Hispanics" may now be white or black, where they once were certainly deemed "nonwhite" (George Bush, remember, in a televized family profile before the 1988 election, referred to his grandson, whose mother is Mexican, as "the little brown one"). In the past, the boundaries of blood counts were quite rigidly policed, evaded by some through "passing," though only at considerable psychological cost. Now this restriction has given way to a licensed and encouraged passing via redefinition; that is, a restructured white identity at once referencing as it passes over racialized difference.[17] This restructured racial identity reflects material interests. Examples include the intersection of race and class interests around "Mexicans" in the debate leading up to the Congressional vote on NAFTA, reading Mexican businessmen as white and the Mexican poor as not, and the ongoing debate concerning extension of health care to "illegal aliens." The census promotion of "Hispanic" while censoring categories like "Chicano" or "Latino" reorders the structure of whiteness as it strictures the boundaries of blackness.

We find in the example of the census, then, a technology that has racialized the social fabric and reflected the distinctions alive in the general culture. This bureaucratic document, distributed decennially throughout the population with a strong request for response, provides to the cultural categories it disseminates the imprimatur of official approval. Via the limits that census forms

place upon self-identification and self-understanding, they serve also to endorse, to reify, and to normalize the categories found in the general culture. The census count, thus, naturalizes this national profile, authorizing the prevailing language of imposed identity and identification, licensing it in the name of the law and the state—from the constraints of which there is no escape.

There is a sense in which the census categories are as significant in their silences and exclusions as they are in their categorical inclusions. Two illustrations will suffice. As Dvora Yanow (1993, 16–17) perceptively states, an alphabetical listing of categories or names would signify a commitment not to differentiate irrelevantly between the entities listed and would be a commitment to treat all equally. The ethnoracial categories throughout the history of the census, however, have never been alphabetically ordered. Indeed, invariantly, "whites" have been listed first. "Whites" are never subdivided for the purposes of enumeration in the way "nonwhites" always have been: there is never a census concern to enumerate the ethnic subdivision of whites in the way that the census count has obsessed over those deemed not white. "White" is the only category that remains formally unchanged throughout the two-hundred-year history of the census count. It is undivided, nonpolarized, without distinction, and virtually without qualification. Nor, as Yanow observes, does the listing follow a historical logic, for then "American Indians" would be followed by "whites" (or perhaps even "Spanish") and so on. Rather, the categories are listed in terms of dominance, "white"; prevailing otherness, "black" (De Tocqueville's "Two Nations"); and then in terms of the hierarchy of being and degrees of alie/n/ation, qualified by this duality of imposed color.

The second significant silence concerns Jews, who are listed nowhere in the history of census categories. For one, there is no question concerning religion, either under "Race" or anywhere else. As Sharon Lee (1993) notes more generally, the absence of

apparent curiosity concerning religious affiliation has a good deal to do with the controversy over the constitutional distinction between church and state. This explains the absence of Judaism as a category, not that of Jews, or Jewishness, to sharpen the contrast between religion and ethnoracial identity. This silence presumes Jewishness away as an appropriate racial designation, denies the possibility, post-1980, of Jewishness as a racial self-identification, rendering such a response abnormal even as it delimits its possibility. A defense of this absence cannot claim that Jewishness is not properly a *racial* category, for neither is "Hispanic." In addition, as I have argued in *Racist Culture*, to say "Jewish" is not a racial category is historically false; and if it weren't, this could count as a reason to silence all racial classification. Of course, it could be that this absence results largely from the reticence of prominent Jewish lobby groups to reinvoke a painful history of exclusionary categorization in and by the law, in which marking off was done to promote a final solution. But this possibility speaks only to the postwar absence of the categorical presence, and addresses not at all the relation between the categorical absence of "Jews" from the first-century-and-a-half of census enumeration and the history of American anti-Semitism.

The silence concerning Jews becomes even more significant when one considers that "Hindu" ("Hindoo") was included as a racial category in the census counts of 1930 and 1940. This inclusion assumes added significance due to a recent racial discrimination appeal to the Sixth District Court of Appeal. Dale Sandhu had been ruled ineligible by a Superior Court judge to bring a claim against Lockheed, his former employer, stating that his layoff had been prompted by racially discriminatory animus. Lockheed argued that, as someone of East Indian origin, Sandhu was considered "Caucasian" by the law, and so his argument failed to have standing under the California Fair Employment and Housing Act. But, appealing to the appearance in the 1980 census

of the category "Asian Indian," the Appeals Court ruled that Sandhu was "subject to a discriminatory animus based on his membership in a group which is perceived as distinct." Similarly, recent jury discrimination suits have turned on demonstrating a significant disparity between the racial composition of a jury pool, or jury and alternates, or jury foreperson, and the racial composition of the jurisdiction in which the jury trial is located as measured by the most recent census tract count.[18]

One can only conclude that racialization is a deep historical reality of this social structure perhaps too readily called "America," so deep perhaps that its design strikes one as purposeful, or at least as the outcome (if not so readily as the instrumentality) of purposeful institutionalization. In the face of overwhelming evidence of a racialized social structure, the continued insistence on implementing an ideal of color-blindness either denies historical reality and its abiding contemporary legacies, or serves to cut off any claims to contemporary entitlements. This latter silence is effected by insisting that we interpret our social arrangements afresh, divorced from their modes of initiation, (re)production, and emergence. Such historical silencing freezes into place the "given" racialized conditions that their invocation in the face of this silencing—from the margins by the marginalized—necessarily wants to place in question.

This, then, becomes our dilemma: We (the People) hold out the ideal of color-blindness in the Constitution, Bill of Rights and Amendments, and in the Civil Rights Acts. No sooner is this done than these founding laws are racialized. To institute the ideal, racialized categories have to be invoked to rectify past injustice and present legacy. Two implications immediately follow. The ideal becomes racialized; that is, tied to its history, deidealized, necessarily unrealized. Yet, at once, given the historicity of racial categories—given their own formative conditions—the terms of racial fabrication themselves change, marking social formation

anew. The census, I have argued, plays a central role in this process. Political technologies like the census accordingly render "race" natural, making it appear that the race naturally characterizes social formation. This naturalism freezes the prevailing terms of social relations into natural givens, seemingly inevitable and unchangeable.

To demonstrate, as I have, that racial terms are transformable does not alone undo the marking of social formation by race, for the new terms may serve simply to re-mark social relations, thereby recoding social exclusion and exploitation. As this recoding renews racialized social structure and relations, it ties present racial formation in a superficially apparent similitude to the past by hiding from view its transformed signification—its codes, meanings, and significance. Race today seems just like race last century, or last decade. The U.S. Census Bureau now recognizes that races are not the same, indeed, they warn us not to make crosscensus racial comparisons. Confusion may be the death knell of counting by race.

So, why count by race at all? Racial counting, it seems, sharpens the paradox: we're damned if we do and damned if we don't. I want to suggest that insofar as the paradox is of our own making—"our" at least in the sense of "our society" collectively—it is ours also to undo. To this end, I want to identify some reasons why in the race to count we cannot (and should not) but count by race.

First, race codes past *and* present discrimination, offering a rough and ready indication of opportunities that were (un)available at different moments in time. It serves as a "measure" therefore of the sorts of odds against or under which middle-class black persons, say, attained or retained their middle-class status; or of the degree to which poorer blacks have been denied socioeconomic mobility, or the degree to which just trials by jury are denied those in this country not white, male, or wealthy.

Counting by class doesn't quite do, for we know not only that it undercounts the racially marginalized, but also that it benefits the whitened marginalized at the expense of the black. In any case, if we want to determine whether there has been any improvement among those discriminated against for the color of their skin, we need to count the poor by race (however problematically defined), and race by wealth. Second, it follows that if we are committed to some form of compensatory justice, and of programs that facilitate compensation, we need reference groups. Given that much discriminatory exclusion has been effected in terms of racial definition, a racial count referenced to the sorts of groups racially excluded in the past becomes crucial. Third, we need—again, paradoxically—to count by race in order to undo racial counting.

This latter suggestion prompts a twofold strategy. Looking back to relieve the past, racially defined injustices and their consequent inequities, the injunction is to count by race—primarily, that is, in terms of "blacks" and "whites," but also in terms of "American Indians." Latter-day "Hispanics," "Asians," and "Pacific Islanders"—whose racial experience in or at the hands of this country qualifies them for compensatory justice—will count on this mandate as not-white; historically, that is, as "black." This suggestion is meant to apply only for administrative technologies of counting; I do not mean to undermine the importance of multicultural histories like those that have begun recently to be narrated. Looking forward, by contrast, and enjoined by a rough motivational mix of color-blindness and democratic self-definition, the implication is to encourage open-ended (I am prompted to add open-faced) self-identification. The undertaking here is to undermine the social control of racial naturalism. Promoting open-ended self-identification takes us beyond the insistence on reified racial categories required by managed multiculturalism and the bureaucratization of diversity. From the

point of view of bureaucratic manipulation and control, counting by properly open-ended self-identification is statistically useless. But that, precisely, is its virtue.

So race is to be counted only where it signals class exploitation and exclusion—past, present, and predictably future. Where race indicates a class that is socially, politically, and economically marginalized, there is a need—if justice is to be served—to identify members, not to ensure their social distance but to promote programs to facilitate their self-defined (that is, autonomous) self-development. In that sense, taking stock is not a matter simply of making a body count but of making the numbers count, defining where we have been, where we are coming from and now are, and where, dialogically conceived, we see ourselves headed.