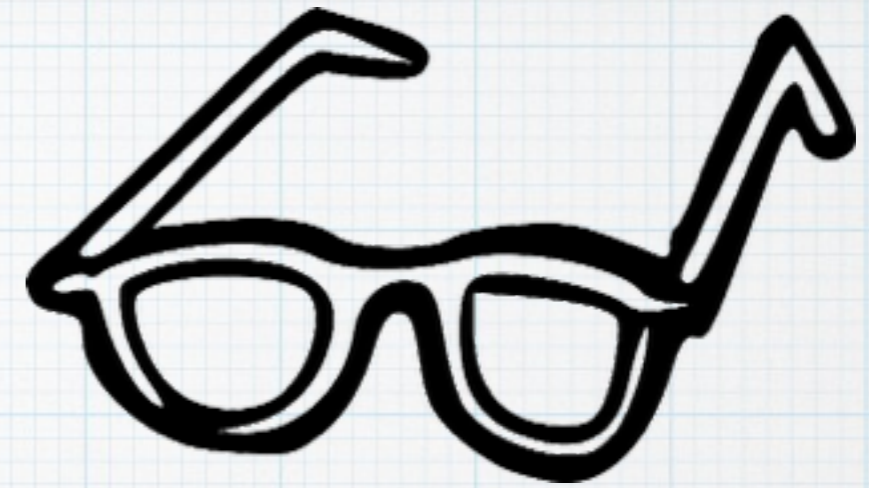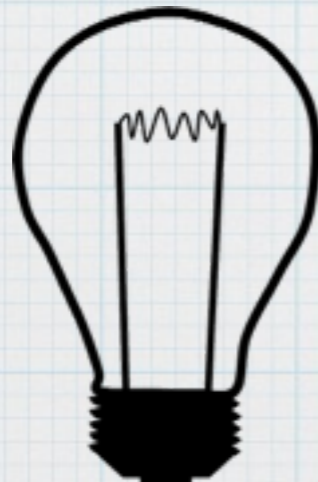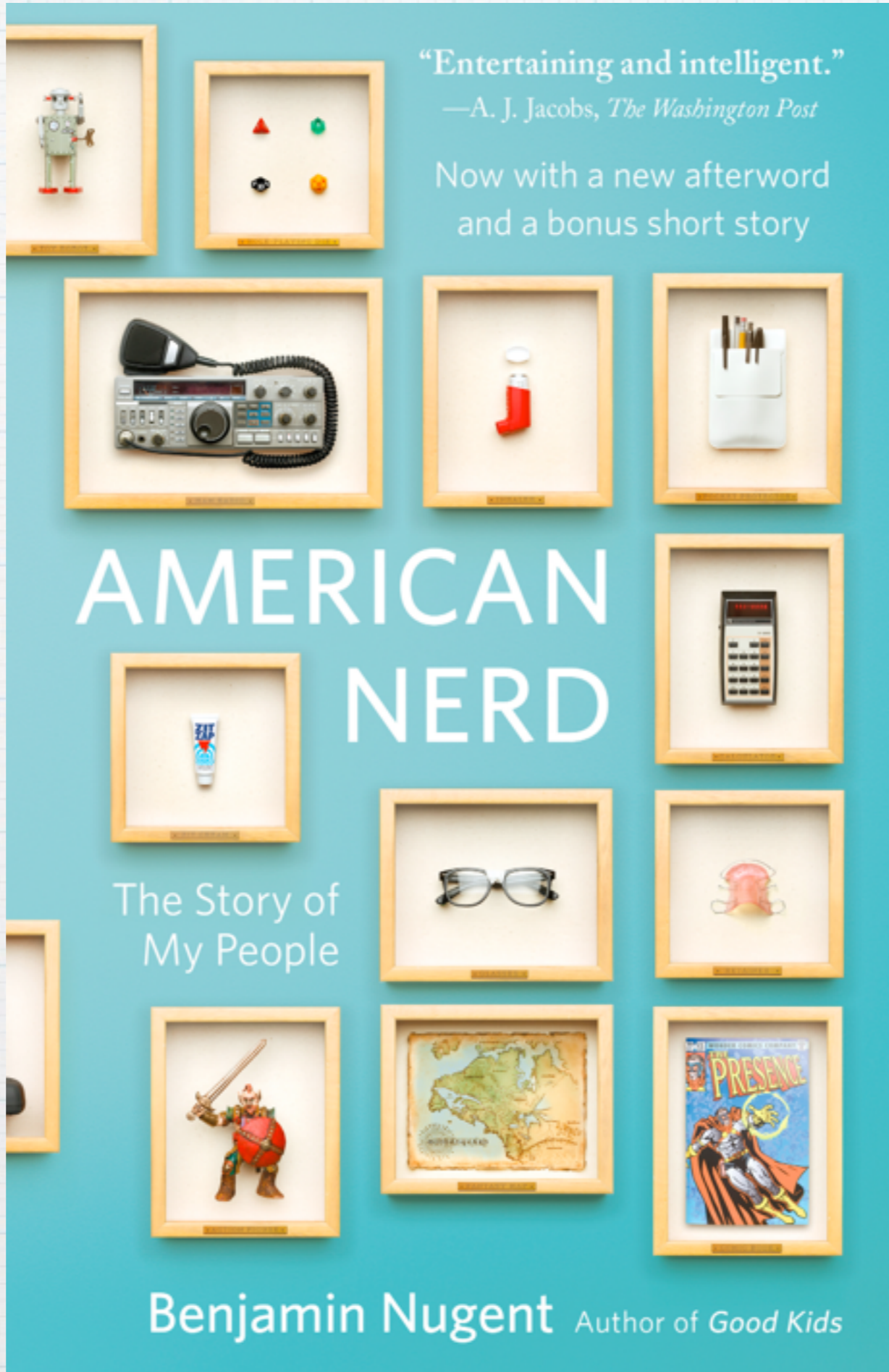# What is a Nerd?

A historical and journalistic examination of the cultural psychology of outcast groups in contemporary North America by literary analysis and comparative case study

Now with a new afterword
and a bonus short story

AMERICAN
NERD

The Story of
My People

Benjamin Nugent Author of *Good Kids*

Definition 1: Nerd

http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nerd

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerd

"**Nerd** (adjective: **nerdy**) is a descriptive term, often used pejoratively, indicating that a person is overly intellectual, obsessive, or socially impaired." —Wikipedia

Definition 2: Geek

http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/geek

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geek

Originally used to describe eccentric or non-mainstream people ... Connotes an expert or enthusiast or a person obsessed with a hobby or intellectual pursuit ... pejorative"

Example 1

Example 2:
White & Nerdy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9qYF9DZPdw

Postulation: Type I Nerd

* Machine-like

* Intellectual

  * ...in ways that are machine-like

* Socially awkward

  * ...in ways that are machine-like

Postulation: Type II Nerd

* Socially excluded

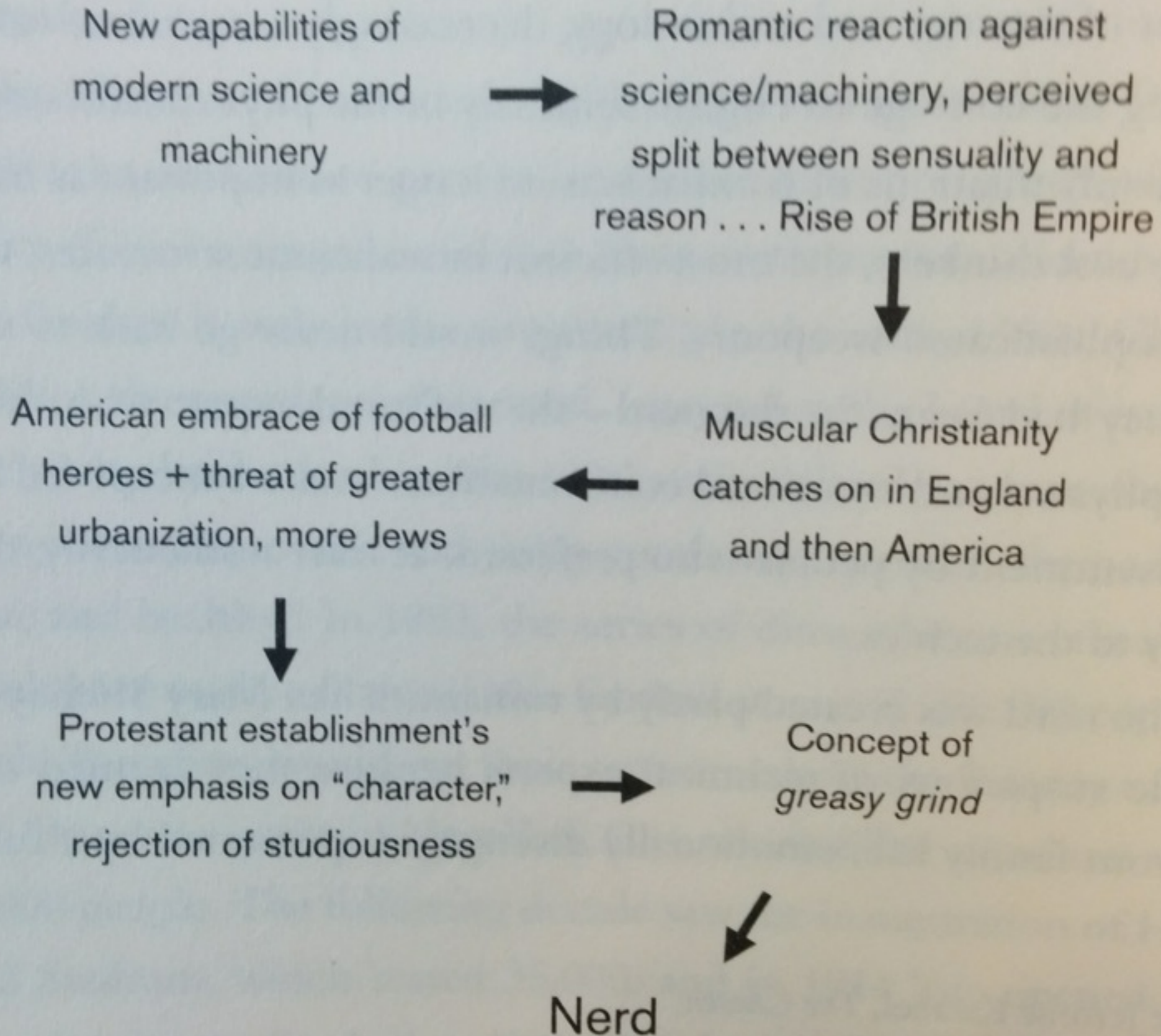* Considered by the popular kids as "uncool"

* Bound up with the Type I Nerd

Early Depictions of Nerds

* Mary in "Pride and Prejudice" (1813)

* Gussie Fink-Nottle in "Right Ho, Jeeves" (1934)

* Victor Frankenstein (1816)

Jocks

* 1892—First physical education requirements in schools

* ↓ farming ↑ sports

CRUDE GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF COMPLEX CHANGES

New capabilities of modern science and machinery → Romantic reaction against science/machinery, perceived split between sensuality and reason . . . Rise of British Empire

↓

American embrace of football heroes + threat of greater urbanization, more Jews ← Muscular Christianity catches on in England and then America

↓

Protestant establishment's new emphasis on "character," rejection of studiousness → Concept of *greasy grind*

↓

Nerd

the 1980s

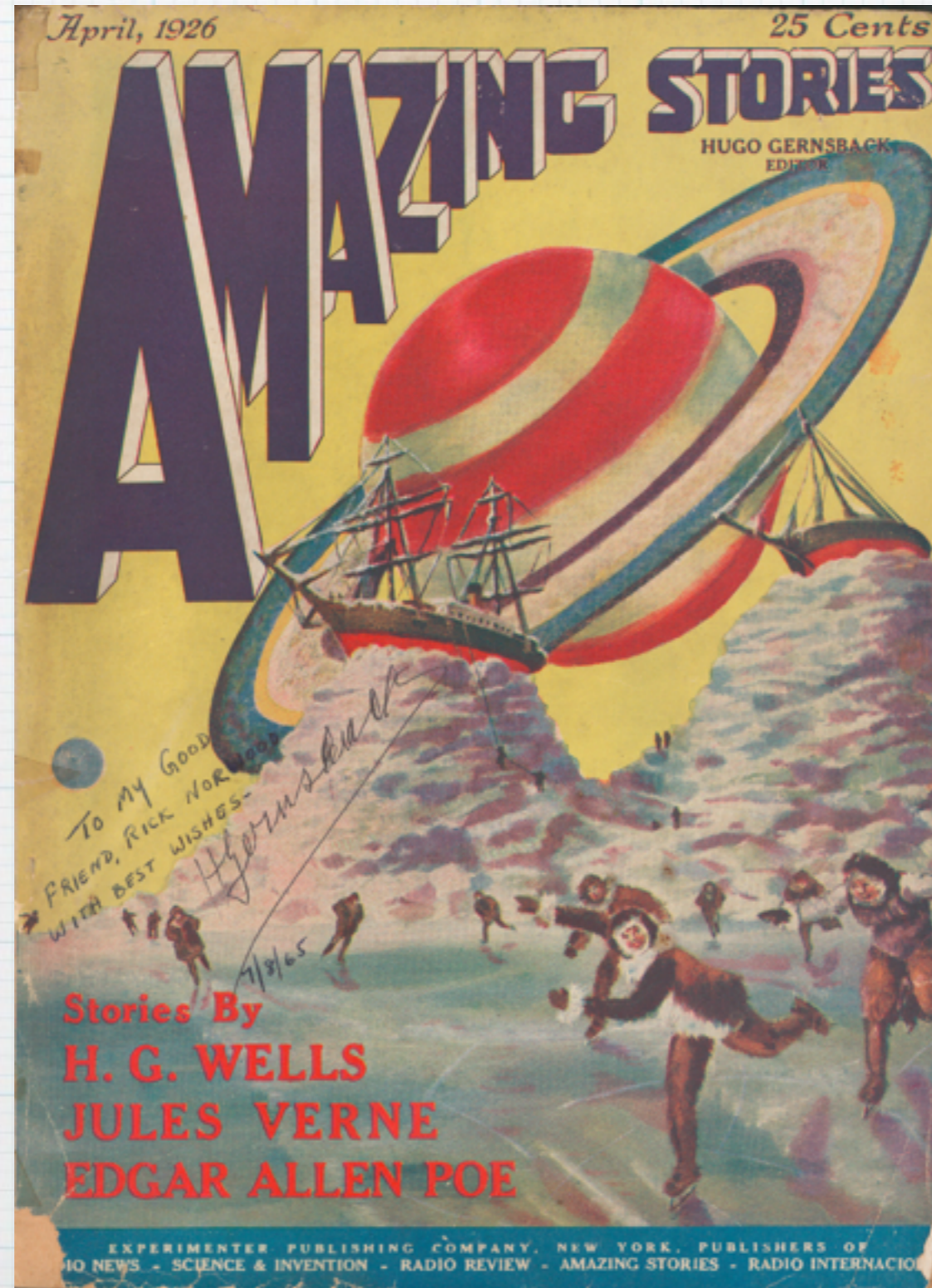|	vs.	
Nerds		Jocks and preppies
Japan		America
Technology		Physical strength
Reason and organization		Intuition and animal instinct
Stiff		Cool
Might dominate in the future		Dominant now
Not sexy		Sexy
Straightforward communication		Barely speaks, uses innuendo, irony

The most cathartic event in *Rambo: First Blood Part II* is the "ar-

Science Fiction

Comic Con

Nerd is the Word

* "If I Ran the Zoo" — Dr. Seuss, 1950

* drip, square — Newsweek, 1951

* Stereotype fully formed, 1960

* Nerds on SNL, 1978?

* Revenge of the Nerds, 1984

* Freaks and Geeks, 1999

Race and Nerdiness

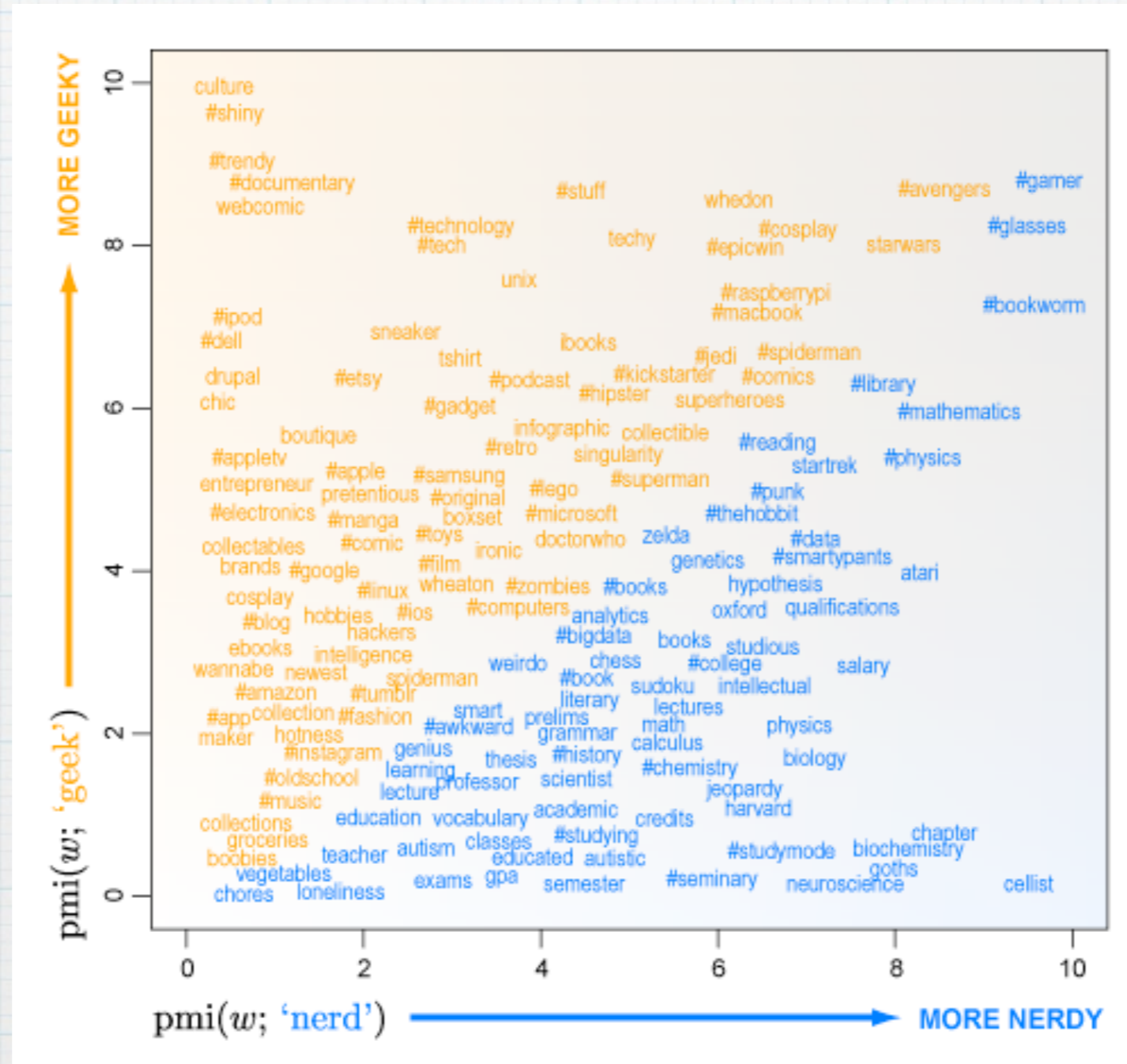## the racism chart

This is my theory about contemporary Western racism and how it relates to the concepts of the jock and the nerd:

REALLY SENSUAL		HUMAN		NOT SENSUAL
Animals	Africans	Europeans	Asians	Machines
	jocks		nerds	

In this model,[1] nerds are people who have been sucked into the orbit of the machine and sapped of human emotion. Asians are more machinelike (industrious, asexual) than whites by cultural in-

Semantic Analysis