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THE NEGRO AS A BIOLOGICAL ELEMENT IN THE AMERICAN POPULATION

W. MONTAGUE COBB

PROFILE

The essential facts about the Negro as a biological element in the American population are common knowledge. He is a *hybrid*, presenting varying degrees of admixture of African, Indian and European blood. He is today an *intra-breeding* group, being prevented by circumstance and law from large scale intermixture with the white majority. He is *fecund*, having maintained under adverse conditions a consistently high birth rate which has raised his numbers to approximately thirteen millions, despite a high mortality rate. He is *physically strong*, showing great endurance at strenuous labor under severe climatic and nutritional hardships, and producing a disproportionately large number of champions in representative fields of athletics. He is *mentally able*, having produced individuals of exceptional attainments in nearly every line of intellectual endeavor and integrated himself into all phases of modern life in which opportunity has opened. He is possessed of *special aptitudes*, as exemplified by an acute perception of pitch and rhythm, which in association with other factors, has resulted in the spirituals and jazz. He has exhibited marked *adaptability* to changing conditions, a fact of considerable importance in his survival on this continent. In the absence of external restrictions, he freely blends his society and his blood with those of peoples

with whom he may be in contact. His future would appear to rest upon other factors than his biological quality.

CONTRIBUTORY STOCKS

African.¹—The American Negro is composed of the admixed descendants of upward of seven and a half million Africans who were involuntarily transplanted to the New World during the three hundred sixty-eight years between 1502 and 1860.

In this total nearly all parts of Africa were undoubtedly represented, but the most careful restudy indicates that the majority of these natives were taken from the region of West Africa about the Gulf of Guinea, principally the Upper Guinea Coast.

These people were drawn from many tribes and showed among themselves considerable variability in physical traits and character. The predominant type is said to have been the so-called "true Negro." This is a West Coast inhabitant described as being of short and sturdy build, and presenting in extreme degree, the features generally associated with the term Negro, namely, deep pigmentation, frizzled hair, everted lips, broad nose, widely separate eyes, protruding lower face, and prominent cheek bones.

The methods used in conscripting the Africans were such that they represented a cross-section of the popu-

¹M. J. Herskovits, "Social History of the Negro," from *A Handbook of Social Psychology*. Worcester: Clark Univ. Press, 1935. pp. 207-267.

lations of the areas from which they came, with some weighting in favor of the better and stronger elements.

Although large numbers of particular peoples were often seized at one time in raids, every step in their subsequent fate served to scatter and mix groups. There was some separation and mixture in the "factories" or stockades on the West African coast where captives were held until full cargoes had accumulated and ships arrived. The trips overseas led to the West Indies, North America, or the Guianas in South America, thus affecting a wide distribution of the Negroes. In addition, there was considerable traffic between the islands and North America and the Guianas, adding greatly to the mixture of the native groups. In the United States, the further mixture and scattering of groups and families incident to the distribution and exchange of Negroes have long been traditional knowledge.

Thus, on the one hand, the Africans as eventually associated with each other in the United States, represented heterogeneous mixtures of the peoples from which they had come, and on the other, the Negroes taken to the West Indies, the United States and the Guianas were of the same stocks. This fact is significant, because in recent years there have been noteworthy voluntary migrations to the United States, of Negroes from the West Indies and South America.

The African contribution to the ancestry of the American Negro may be summarized as a cross-sectional representation of West Coast populations with some weighting in favor of the better and stronger elements.

Indian.—The extensive admixture

of Indian blood² in the American Negro is most strikingly shown by Herskovits'³ recent finding that nearly one third of the subjects in the large and representative series examined by him, acknowledged Indian blood in their ancestry.

Significant intermixture between Negroes and Indians has occurred from early colonial to very recent times. In general this interbreeding was with the tribes native to areas in which the Negroes came to be located. In the North and Upper South amalgamation resulted first from contacts of Negroes and Indians in servitude and of Negroes escaped to the Indians; later and most important, from intermarriage between free Negroes and reservation Indians.

In the deep South there was considerable intermixture with the Seminole and Creek Indians, and somewhat less with the Cherokees, Choctaws and Chickasaws, who were generally hostile to Negro admixture. Since the removal of the above "Five Civilized Tribes" to the Western reservations, various factors have acted to diminish the intermixture with Negroes, so that today, relatively little new crossing occurs. Shortly after the Civil War many Negro Union soldiers settled in Kansas and interbred with the Indians there.

In most other parts of the United States occasional unions between Negroes and Indians are known to have occurred. At the present time no significant degree of admixture of Negro and Indian stocks is in progress.

² K. W. Porter. Relations between Negroes and Indians within the Present Limits of the United States. *Journal Negro History*, 17:1-81, 1932.

³ M. J. Herskovits, *The Anthropometry of the American Negro*. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1930.)

Among the Indians with whom they intermixed, the Negroes frequently assumed positions of leadership and dominance and married into the families of chiefs.

European.—The lightened skin color of the American Negro is the most eloquent testimony of the large amount of white blood he possesses. This white component has been a continuous acquisition over the entire period of Negro residence in America. It represents all the European elements with whom the Negro has had contact, namely, British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and Danish, but chiefly British.

Paradoxically, this most obvious contribution is the best known and least documented. The circumstances which fostered large scale white intermixture no longer exist and what was once a steady infusion has been reduced to a trickle. The white blood received by the Negro represents a cross section of the older white population, with a decided weighting in favor of the better circumstanced and abler elements.

Additional.—In recent years a small amount of Mexican, Chinese, Filipino and Japanese blood has been incorporated by the Negro, which has not yet become distributed in a very large number of individuals.

THE AMERICAN NEGRO

In the United States today, law and custom decree that any citizen who is *known* to have African blood, however diluted, is a Negro. Consequently, from American Negroes, individuals may be selected who might serve as examples of nearly every physical type in the world, from West African to

Nordic. It is not likely, however, that this range of diversity will hold indefinitely. Africans are no longer being imported, the Indian is practically off the scene and white intermixture is strongly interdicted. As a result the Negro has become a group which breeds essentially within itself. Continued long enough, this process exclusive of other factors, would be expected to produce a physical type which would be a proportionate composite of the ancestral stocks. Herskovits has supplied evidence that this is the case.

The data from his series of 5,659 individuals indicated that in respect to contrasting physical traits such as skin color, lip thickness and nasal breadth, the American Negro is developing a surprisingly homogeneous physical type, intermediate between the parent African and white stocks and exhibiting in some traits less variability than the parent groups themselves. The prevalence of the "Brown American" is a recognized fact among the laity in song, story, and common parlance.

A natural question in the consideration of the Negro of the future is what his appearance will be. Should the present custom of breeding within the group continue over several additional generations, the expectation would be that the homogeneity of the group as a physical type would be increased. Both Negroid and Caucasoid extreme types would become more rare and the reality of a 'new race' of "Brown Americans" more apparent.

Selective factors operative within the Negro group itself must also be considered. Small numbers of sufficiently Caucasoid Negroes regularly

pass over into the whites and are thus lost to the Negro as breeders. Thus certain potential lighteners of the average pigmentation are removed. On the other hand, it is probable that some dark females fail to obtain mates because of the widespread tendency of Negro men to marry women lighter than themselves. Both these factors would suggest a medium brown complexion as a future stabilizing point.

The problem is by no means so simple, however, for although the number of Negroes who do not have some white admixture is relatively small, Herskovits estimating it at about twenty per cent, the white blood is not evenly distributed throughout the whole Negro population. Much of it is concentrated in what is sometimes called a mulatto class. Indirect evidence has been adduced to show that the mulatto birth rate is lower than that of the Negro as a whole. This would mean that irrespective of color selection within the group, the American Negro type would in time stabilize around a darker brown average complexion and facial features definitely on the Negroid side of intermediate. Extensive investigations will be required to produce satisfactory data on this point.

INHERITANCE OF NEGROID TRAITS

A knowledge of the principles governing the inheritance of Negroid physical traits would be of value in consideration of the Negro type of the future. Unfortunately, such knowledge is very meager.

Barnes⁴ found that in respect to skin pigmentation, variability in the color

of offspring increases with increasing differences in the pigmentation of the parents. This is in accordance with Mendelian principles.

When the parents are of approximately the same color, variability in offspring should be greatest in those whose parents represent the greatest racial mixture. Thus, Mendelian theory would require that variability be highest in offspring of parents of about equal parts of Negro and white blood, and lower in those whose parents were nearly all Negro, on the one hand, or nearly all white, on the other. This was not found, however. Variability in the skin color of offspring increased with an increasing amount of white blood in the parents. No satisfactory explanation is available. Simpler Mendelian theories have been advanced but fail to cover all the facts. The subject is still open for investigation.

Herskovits' genealogies revealed that physical traits varied from Negroid to Caucasoid with the amount of crossing which was involved. The possession of Indian blood did not seem to make any appreciable difference. We know, however, that Indian characteristics are readily discernible in many Negroes. Day's⁵ unique study of Negro-white families in the United States makes it quite clear that much must be discovered about human heredity before the American Negro can satisfactorily predict what his children will look like.

FECUNDITY

The census shows that the numbers of the Negro have increased from

⁴I. Barnes. "The Inheritance of Pigmentation in the American Negro," *Human Biology*, 1:321-81, 1929.

⁵C. B. Day. *Negro-White Families in the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932.

757,208 in 1790 to 11,891,143 in 1930. At the same time the Negro as a percentage of the total population has declined from 19.3 in 1790 to 9.7 in 1930.⁶ His numbers and hence his physical needs have grown sixteen fold. As an element in the population and in those powers which derive from numbers alone, he has shrunk to less than half his early proportions. In any contemplation of the future, these relationships are very significant because the competition for the essentials of existence inevitably sharpens when population continues to grow amid fixed territorial and resource boundaries. It is most important to know whether the population trends indicated by the figures stated are likely to continue.

The disproportionate increase in the white population has been due mainly to enormous numbers of foreign-born immigrants and several generations of their descendants. Since large scale immigration is now permanently curtailed by law, the future composition of our population will be determined chiefly by the rates of natural increase of its constituent elements. Attention is thus focussed upon the comparative birth rates of Negroes and whites, the number of individuals who survive to reproductive ages, and the rapidity with which generations succeed each other in the two groups.

With due regard for statistical pitfalls, Holmes⁷ cites that by all acceptable criteria of fertility the Negro is now reproducing more rapidly than his white competitor. In 1930 the birth rate of Negroes in the Registration

Area was 21.6 per thousand population compared with 18.7 for the whites. The birth rate of Negroes per thousand enumerated females in the reproductive ages, 15 to 45 years, was 82.5 and that of native whites 78.4. The average number of children ever born to mothers who had borne a child in the year 1930 was 3.6 for Negroes and 3.1 for total whites.

The high birth rate of the Negro in the past has maintained for him a favorable balance over deaths, in spite of a high mortality rate. This mortality has been chiefly from preventable causes such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, venereal disease, and external causes. The victims of these agents are generally in the reproductive period or younger, and the race has thus been deprived of potential producers of progeny.

At the present time the public health program of the Federal Government is concentrated upon venereal disease, tuberculosis, and maternal and child care. Because of the tremendous toll which these diseases and the misfortunes of gestation and infancy take among Negroes, the success of the Government's program should result in further increase in the number of Negro live births.

Natural Fertility and Birth Control

More significant than the birth rate are its causes. These may be natural, a function of the age composition of a population, or environmental. Our knowledge of reproductive phenomena in the primates shows that the same physiological mechanisms obtain in the rhesus monkey, the chimpanzee, and man.⁸

⁶ C. E. Hall, *Negroes in the United States*. Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Office, 1935.

⁷ S. J. Holmes, *The Negro's Struggle for Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937.

⁸ C. G. Hartman, *Time of Ovulation in Women*. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1936.

In each of these species the female normally releases one ovum or egg from an ovary each month in the middle of the intermenstrual period. This ovum can be fertilized for probably less than an hour after its release. If during this time it encounters a mature spermatozoan, conception results. If not, the egg degenerates. Thus among the higher primates, the female is normally fertile for somewhat less than one hour each month. Since this pattern characterizes the higher members of the order as a whole, no significant differences in natural fertility within one species, such as man, would be anticipated, barring functional abnormalities such as failure to ovulate.

Pearl⁹ actually found, in his study of the complete reproductive histories of 25,316 white and 5,633 Negro overtly fertile women, that the natural innate fertility of white and Negro women is identical. Contraception, however, is much more extensively and successfully practiced among the whites. In Pearl's series, the pregnancy rate in Negro women who practiced contraception was as high as in those who did not. Obviously in these subjects the techniques were inefficiently applied.

The association of low birth rate and good circumstances as contrasted with high birth rate and low economic status has been long established. Birth control in the well circumstanced is principally responsible for the disparity. Negroes in relative economic security are known to practice contraception for the same reason and with the same success as comparable

whites. Improvement in the general economic status of the Negro would most certainly be followed by an increase in voluntary restraint of his birth rate.

Population Age and Distribution

The potential birth rate of a population rises as the proportion of its females in the reproductive ages increases. The percentage of Negro women in this age period (15 to 45 years) has steadily grown for the past five decades, from 45.1 per cent in 1890 to 52.0 per cent in 1930. The age composition of the female population has thus become increasingly favorable for a high birth rate.

Another factor affecting the relative speed of growth of the Negro and white groups is the fact that Negro generations succeed one another more rapidly than those of whites, because of a greater concentration of births in the earlier reproductive years. Holmes¹⁰ and Parker estimated the average length of a Negro generation to be about one year less than that of a white (27.5 as against 28.5 years). Without restraining factors, such as high mortality, the Negro would be expected to gain a full generation of offspring on the whites in twenty-eight years. This is an additional reason that reduction of his mortality would tend to accelerate the multiplication of the Negro.

A final consideration on this phase is that the rural South seems likely to retain the great bulk of the Negro population. As this is his best breeding ground and least lethal environment, it offers the best situation for the continuance of the reproductive qualities

⁹ R. Pearl, "Fertility and Contraception in Urban Whites and Negroes," *Science*, 83:503-506, My (22) 1936.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*

which have enabled him to attain his present numbers.

PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION

The Negro is strong and hardy. His superior physical strength was one of the prime reasons for his original importation to this hemisphere. He was much more durable than the Indians whom he replaced in servitude. Regard for this physical capacity at labor always prevailed over the objection that he possessed a spirit which on many occasions made him rebel and massacre his oppressors; and when cornered commit mass suicide.

The ability to work hard and long is today so firmly fixed in the white man's mind as an attribute of the Negro, that when himself required to make strenuous exertion he commonly remarks that he has had to work like a Negro.

Not only the conditions surrounding his arrival but those under which the Negro has lived in America must have had a selective effect in improving his stock. Pre-Emancipation exploitation must be credited with a mass elimination not alone of the weak and unfit, but also of those who were lacking in that individual shrewdness which is a vital essential in self preservation.

The post-bellum era was itself a test of survival capacity, with millions of Negroes suddenly thrown without preparation into a hostile society which was not organized for their absorption or maintenance. Many were eliminated by disease and adversity in this period as its mortality records show.

No other group of Americans in such large numbers has had to pass such rigorous tests of survival fitness

as has the Negro. From this standpoint he is the most highly selected stock in America. The Pilgrim Fathers and the Western Pioneers were tough, and may their glory grow, but the Negro has had to be tougher, though unsung. It remains to be determined whether the unemployment and attendant environmental conditions of recent years will have a deteriorating effect. Such influences will naturally be shared by both races but perforce proportionately more by the Negro.

Although many scientific studies, a review of which has appeared in this JOURNAL,¹¹ have been made of the physical constitution of the Negro, the reasons for his hardihood remain unknown, rather they appear the more mysterious because such studies have generally revealed points of apparent defect rather than of perfection.

His vital viscera (heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, spleen, etc.) have been found to be anatomically and physiologically like those of other varieties of man, with the exception of a somewhat smaller spleen. The vital or lung capacity of the Negro has been frequently reported to be less than that of the white, and his feet have been stated to be typically low-arched or flat, characteristics difficultly reconcilable with his known endurance and fleetness.

No reports have presented a brief for superiority in Negro anatomy or physiology, nor is this required. Certainly those non-racial factors which make for general constitutional health and vigor must be possessed in abundance by the Negro, or his athletes, coming as they do from varied local-

¹¹ W. M. Cobb, "The Physical Constitution of the American Negro," *Journal of Negro Education* 3:340-88. J1 1934.

ities and backgrounds, could not manifest the high excellence they have regularly shown.

The complete record of the Negro in sports cannot be approached here. It will suffice to state that at this writing, Negroes, always prominent in boxing hold the championships in the upper five weight classes in professional boxing and a Negro basketball team holds and has repeatedly held the world's professional championship. His "All American" gridiron stars are well known. In track and field, the record almanac for the gamut of events and the Olympic annals attest his excellence.

In a previous report¹² we have shown that this athletic prowess is not limited to any particular events nor can it be ascribed to any anatomical peculiarities yet discovered. A larger cross-sectional area of nerves, implying better conduction of nerve impulses, is the sole suggestive finding in this direction. Yet the tapping reflexes of Jesse Owens with hand and forearm movements were no speedier than those of the average person.

In the search for the causes of superior function in the human machinery, the evidence of morphology must be supplemented by that of biochemistry, as Todd has shown in the mineralization of bone, and Dill in the oxygen combining power of the blood and lactic acid formation in muscle.

MENTAL ABILITY

In the same sense that the performances of Negro athletes, though not explained, cannot be denied, the evidence of mental capability in the Negro

thrusts through sheaves of proof to the contrary.

Anatomical studies of the brain have yielded conflicting and inconclusive results. Psychological measures of intelligence have similarly failed to depict satisfactorily the limits of innate intellectual capacities of human beings.

It seems true that according to the criteria used, the average level of intelligence of Negroes in the United States is lower than that of the whites. But from the nature of the tests and the differences in status of the two groups, this would be expected. Since the overlap of the tests is twenty-five per cent, millions of Negroes have intelligence ratings above the average white.¹³ On the other hand, individual Negroes have demonstrated by their accomplishments, ability of the highest caliber in nearly every intellectual field, to cite DuBois in letters, Just in science, Marian Anderson in music and Robeson for general versatility. According to the same standards by which other men are measured, they have produced due share of qualified professionals in all lines they have been able to enter. Competitive academic honor societies, such as Phi Beta Kappa, list a definitely representative proportion of Negroes. As a matter of fact, the carefully planned restrictions to prevent the entry of Negroes into certain professions, businesses and skilled trades is itself a recognition of their potential competence if admitted.

One is often presented with the thesis that the Negro has not yet been exposed to general hardships or Euro-

¹² W. M. Cobb, "Race and Runners," *Journal of Health and Physical Education*, 7:1-8, Ja 1936.

¹³ R. Pintner, "Intelligence Differences between American Negroes and Whites," *Journal of Negro Education*, 3:513-518, Jl 1934.

pean civilization long enough for complete competence in management of the complexities of modern life. There are two satirical answers to this approach.

The first is that the white man would appear to assume that all other peoples must be slow learners as he was. Our fossils show that late paleolithic man in Europe was as highly evolved in body and brain as are the most advanced peoples of today.¹⁴ The inference is that it has taken the white man the approximately 35,000 years since late stone age times¹⁵ to get as far as the present, but this distance has not been great enough to tax the capacities of the body and brain he had when his sole tools were stone implements and his dwellings were caves. The things one civilization has learned by tedious trial and error may be quickly absorbed by another through contact. We all stand on the shoulders of our ancestors.

The notoriously slow progress of thinking, science, art and commerce in pre-Renaissance Europe is *prima facie* evidence that the Caucasian intellect of itself does not function at particularly high levels or with devastating speed. The white man owes his dominance not to better brains than other men but to certain methods. Bereft of his control of the best military equipment and of the money system, the white man's vaunted biological superiority would become as one with Nineveh and Tyre.

The second answer is that the defects of modern European civilization are so obvious, particularly in respect

to its dependence on exploitation and periodic slaughter and its failure to adjust population size and caliber to resources, that while its material achievements excite amazement, its social organization hardly evokes excessive admiration.

SPECIAL APTITUDES

Psychologists have amply demonstrated that the measurement of special abilities is very difficult because of the necessity of discerning between innate intellectual capacity and coloring elements such as motivation, culture and emotional patterns. From this standpoint, it must be conceded that no brief can be made for unequivocally established special abilities in the Negro.

But taking him as we find him, nature and nurture fused, he does manifest certain aptitudes in musical and other directions. Many investigators have found him to respond better than whites to tests for pitch and rhythm discrimination and other musical qualities.¹⁶ He has certainly created the only folk music native to our country and this in our own day is being developed into the more advanced musical forms, as in the works of Still and Dawson, such as the classic composers did long ago for the folk music of Europe.

Woodson¹⁷ has shown that centuries of acculturation in Africa predisposed the Negro to law and order, and that he had long ago evolved principles in collective living such as common ownership of land and trial by jury which operated as, if not more, successfully

¹⁴ A. Keith, *The Antiquity of Man*, 2nd Ed. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1929, p. 339.

¹⁵ A. Hrdlicka, *The Skeletal Remains of Early Man*. Smithsonian Misc. Coll. V. 83, 1930, p. 14.

¹⁶ R. P. Daniel, "Negro-White Differences in Non-Intellectual Traits, and in Special Abilities," 3:411-23. J1 1934, *Journal of Negro Education*.

¹⁷ C. G. Woodson, *The African Background Outlined*. Washington: Assoc. Publishers, 1936.

than among contemporary whites. The recent researches of Herskovits have greatly illuminated the stubbornness with which the African heritage survives in the culture of the American Negro. It is necessary to recognize the Negro as a population element conditioned by a long background in customs and habits which make for social stability.

ADAPTABILITY

In contrast to the Indian, the American Negro has exhibited a great capacity for adaptation to environmental change. Adaptability has been said to be the prime requisite for organic survival. The Negro's survival in his present numbers speaks for itself.

His potency for mass adaptability has been severely tested on three major occasions: first, on the transplantation to America, with its brutal hardships and heterogeneous shuffling of individuals; second, after the Civil War, in the turmoil, confusion and privation of the Reconstruction; and third, in the northward industrial migrations of the Great War and thereafter, when hundreds of thousands of Negroes changed from rural life in a benign climate to which they were accustomed, to rigorous conditions of urban life in a more severe climate which were strange to them. Through each of these periods the Negro suffered especial mortality but recouped his losses.

For a time it was thought that urban life would decimate the Negro, but it is clear now that where he can get an economic foothold and the vital essentials he survives as well as any.

In the kaleidoscopic changes of

modern technological advance we find that Negroes become expert in new specialties as easily as their white brothers and frequently produce experts in fields from which they are professionally barred, such as aviation.

THE FUTURE

The interpretation of present trends is all that is attempted here, with no imputation of prophecy. The first consideration is that life in the United States may be expected to become more highly competitive, due to the continued growth of the population in fixed territorial limits. Though the population increase is slowing pace, its uninterrupted progress for a long time may be anticipated.

Although the Negro has steadily declined since 1790 as a percentage of the total population, there are indications that he may begin to increase at a faster rate than the whites. His reproductive position is very favorable. He has a high birth rate, a sex ratio with a large percentage of females in the nubile age range, and a more rapid succession of generations than the whites. The public health program of the Federal Government should reduce his mortality from the principal diseases which deprive him of citizens in the reproductive ages. There appear imminent no changes in his economic status or population concentration of a magnitude sufficient to lower his birth rate significantly.

Since large scale immigration is permanently prohibited, the American population of the future will be derived from the natural increase of the heterogeneous groups which now compose it. These groups today appear

headed for differentiation into two more or less homogeneous groups, the one white and the majority, and the other Negro and the minority.

There are no real bars to the eventual amalgamation of the various white elements scattered over the land. As Shapiro¹⁸ has pointed out, increased ease of internal migrations, economic improvement, and innumerable other social agencies, will continue to shuffle the white population and promote its miscegenation and consequent eventual homogeneity.

The Negro likewise appears directed toward greater homogeneity because he has become an intrabreeding group without significant new influxes of the African, Indian and white blood which have entered into his composition. It would further appear that the average American Negro of the future will be darker and more Negroid in appearance than many Brown Americans of today. This would derive from the facts that the rural Negro outnumbers the urban, has a smaller admixture of white blood and is more prolific. In time this biological reality would be expected to more than balance the lightening effect of the prevalent common preference of Negro males for mates lighter than themselves.

The implications of these present trends are obvious and ominous. With the white majority a more homogeneous group than it is today, the position of the unabsorbed Negro as *the* minority would be intensified. Ultimately, only two solutions could result from this situation, amalgamation or elimination of one of the competing groups. One tenth cannot conquer nine-tenths

when nine-tenths has the arms and commissary.

Amalgamation would undoubtedly occur were it not for the majority prejudice which is often implemented by law. This prejudice is not instinctive. It must be taught and carefully taught, as the behavior of the very young demonstrates. It is *not physical*, as omnipresent mixed bloods eloquently testify. It is not *genetically rational*, as no dysgenic effects have been proven from Negro-white hybridization and many Negroes are human beings of better quality than many whites. The absorption of the healthy and able Negro should add considerably to the vitality of the American population. The most important roots of American race prejudice are clearly non-biological and their discussion is not in the province of this paper. The popular stereotype of the Negro as a biological inferior has neither scientific origin nor usefulness.

As long as it is known that the material resources of this country are more than enough to maintain the entire population if properly distributed, there may be expected a continuation of that spirit of humanitarian justice and altruism which vainly seeks to give the Negro his legal and Christian due through imperfectly duplicate facilities in segregated communities. When the day comes, as it surely will unless our national wisdom is more able than now to organize against it, that there is really not enough to go around, the homogenized majority may be expected to begin to push out *the* minority as a competitor for the essentials of life. Events in our own history and that of other nations furnish an excellent working knowledge of

¹⁸ H. L. Shapiro, "Some Reflections of an Anthropologist on the Future of Our Population," *Proc. Am. Philos. Soc.*, 80:587-600, 1939.

the techniques of the "pushing out" and their forerunners. Various students of population have estimated that within two or three hundred years all the arable lands of the world may be occupied.¹⁹ In short, the earth may be getting crowded. In such an extremity, even if a hypothetical majority had succeeded in crowding out all competing minorities, its own continued multiplication would set it warring within itself. One must turn, therefore, from the elimination possibility as undesirable, not because it would victimize the Negro, but because it must prove ultimately futile.

Those most familiar with the pertinent facts do not believe that the eugenists' goal of recruiting the progeny of the future by conscious selection from the best stocks of today is approaching practicability. The greatest handicap is the inadequacy of the eugenists' knowledge. Heywood Broun, the journalist, has aptly remarked,

As far as the elimination of the "unfit" is concerned, I have never been able to see anything against preventing imbeciles from reproducing themselves. Beyond that there must be clash all along the line. . . . Thoroughbred horses are bred scientifically, and yet in 25 years no horse has come close to Whiskbroom's record for a mile and a quarter. On the other hand, mankind, which still lives helter-skelter, has produced several runners who have broken the daylight out of all existing records for one mile. There are more things in heaven and earth than have been dreamt of yet in the laboratories of the research men.²⁰

There are, however, developments which suggest a more hopeful outlook for the Negro. More and more the importance of health as a prime popu-

lation asset and the relative unimportance of race as an index of human quality are being recognized by the forward looking. The deteriorating effects of the spawning of the imbecilic and physically degenerate elements of all races are being emphasized. Given time enough the perception that race is a device useful only for the classification of the physical characters of man and that it has no significance whatever in the assessment of biological quality²¹ may spread sufficiently widely to result in the gradual addition of the Negro as a colorful ingredient to the melting pot which will produce the future American population, and so justly preserve the interests of all its elements.

PRESCRIPTION

Against this distant and hopeful day when race will be a historical phase, others less auspicious must be anticipated. In any event, it would seem that the following precepts might prove of value to the Negro.

1. He should maintain his high birth rate, observing the conditions of life necessary to this end. This alone has made him able to increase in spite of decimating mortality and hardships. If the tide should turn against him later, strength will be better than weakness in numbers.

2. He should make a fetish of health. Progressive eradication of tuberculosis, venereal disease, pneumonia, and maternal and infant mortality, will give him sounder and more abundant parental stock and offspring.

3. He should cultivate excellence in sports. This spreads healthful habits.

¹⁹ G. Taylor. *Environment, Race and Migration*. Chicago: University of Chicago, Press, 1937.

²⁰ Scripps-Howard Syndicated Column, Set. 28, 1935.

²¹ H. L. Shapiro, "Quality in Human Populations," *Scientific Monthly*, 45:109-118, Ag 1937.

It conserves interest and should uncover new material in a line of activity in which he has already been very beneficially successful.

4. He should assiduously pursue education and should train the largest possible number of his best minds to fill a cross-sectional spread of occupations in modern life, subsidizing those who cannot find immediate openings. Generalized mental excellence must be maintained, both from the biological standpoint and because none of us, I am sure, can tell just when

Gabriel will blow his horn.

5. As a form of organic life he should aim to effect his integration into all phases of the civilization of which he is a part.

6. He should adhere to his just insistence on his full Constitutional rights under this Government, never temporizing in principle, if forced to do so in fact, with the doctrine of equality through segregation or any other policy which would interfere with his ultimate assimilation into the American conglomerate.