
American Ideas about Race and Olympic Races from the 1890s to the 1950s: Shattering Myths or Reinforcing Scientific Racism?

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At the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin Jesse Owens won four gold medals. For American civilization, his feats represented more than just an exceptional athletic performance. His triumphs provided data. The data—as a host of observers including W. Montague Cobb, the only African American to hold a doctorate in physical anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century,¹ understood—required explanation.² Some Americans interpreted the data as shattering Nazi myths of Aryan racial superiority. Some believed the data would hasten the integration of American society. Some even hoped it signaled the beginning of the end of American racism. Others interpreted the data as proof that the United States actually enjoyed practical racial equality—contrary to social realities.

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Several insightful thinkers pointed out that while Owens' runs and jumps supposedly annihilated Nazi racial ideology, they had little impact on American versions of white supremacist philosophy. Some observers explained Owens' victories through the entrenched racist paradigms of the 1930s. Allegedly less-evolved than European Americans and thus closer to "nature," African Americans were supposed to be better in "unthinking" physical competitions than "brighter" whites. Dean Cromwell, who coached Owens and other sprinters on the 1936 United States Olympic team, accounted for the prowess of Owens and other African-American Olympians by asserting "that the Negro excels ... because he is closer to the primitive than the white man."³ The acceptance by many of Cromwellian versions of the myth of black physical superiority in the dominant white culture of the United States reinforced traditional patterns of racism.⁴



The month after Owens won four gold medals in Berlin, *The Crisis* reprinted a *Baltimore Sun* cartoon depicting Owens running Nazi racial ideology into the dust. *The Crisis* 43 (September 1936): 272.

That myth, frequently bolstered by claims of scientific legitimacy, has grown increasingly powerful in American culture since Owens ran in Berlin. In an essay entitled "Race and Runners" and in other scientific articles, Cobb fought the flourishing mythology that Owens and his fellow "black auxiliaries," as the international press corps dubbed African-American Olympians, owed their medals to any "physical attributes peculiar to their race."⁵ Cobb's efforts did little to halt the advance of theories about "athletic genes." In fact, the successes of Owens and other African-American athletes in the 1930s marks a crucial shift in scientific paradigms and popular beliefs about the relation of race to athletic performance.⁶

Puzzles, Politics, and Paradigm Shifts

From the late 1800s to the 1930s as evolutionary models of human genetics and racial difference flourished, many in the scientific community subscribed to a racial theory that asserted that peoples of European descent were the most advanced products of natural selection—athletically as well as intellectually. In these theories Europeans, especially northern Europeans, led the world in every imaginable human category—physical as well as mental.⁷ The triumphs of Owens and other "black auxiliaries" presented problems for those who adhered to the reigning paradigm of complete European supremacy. The puzzling data represented by Owens and other athletes of African descent would spark the development of new theories about the relation of race to athletic performance and about the connections between physical and other forms of prowess.⁸

The interpretations of Owens' Olympic triumphs provided data for social constructions of race.⁹ Scientific and popular analyses of Owens' athletic feats inscribed fundamental differences between people of differing skin color and heritage. Race was an omnipresent category in explanations of Owens' prowess.¹⁰ At the same time, Owens' athletic feats were incorporated into American discourses on national identity.¹¹ Owens ran to victory in an era in which American audiences firmly believed that sports created what the political theorist Robert Putnam has recently labeled "social capital," or what earlier generations of thinkers have called civic virtue.¹² This social resin is supposed to serve as the essential binding agent in the manufacture of progressive democratic societies. Owens' Olympian achievements, and those of other American victors, were hailed by some commentators in the American media as proof that the United States led the world in the production of social capital. In their tales Owens and the "black auxiliaries" symbolized social capital's grandest purchase—the birth of American nation characterized by racial equality.¹³

Owens and his fellow African-American Olympians thus simultaneously symbolized both the process of nation-making and the process of marking racial differences.¹⁴ The use of the Olympic Games and other sporting events for the generation of data about modern nations represents an important intersection of the larger histories of nation-making and the social construction of race.¹⁵ C.L.R. James, the distinguished West Indian scholar of Atlantic civilization, understood the significance of this intersection. "*What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?*" James asks as he begins his exploration of sport as the crucial language for shaping national and racial identities in the West Indies and in the larger twentieth-century British empire. "To answer involves ideas as well as

facts,” James argues, underscoring the point that ideas about race and nationhood drawn from athletic contests have important consequences. He makes it clear that those who think that they understand sport but ignore the complex social histories in which athletic games are embedded know nothing of value. So, too, those who know about race and nationalism but do not understand the role of sport in the manufacture of both know very little about the construction of modern societies James insists. Literature, art, political theory, and other forms of high culture do not animate popular national discourses in James’ view. “These fill space in print,” he noted, “but not in minds.” In modern nations, James contends, sport captures minds. Sport is the language of the “common people.”¹⁶

In the United States since the late nineteenth century, sport has served as a common language that crosses, at least for transient moments, class, ethnic, and sometimes even gender boundaries. Languages are essential ingredients in the construction of modern nations. Languages also serve as tools for the social construction of race. The clearest expressions in American history of the use of sport in imagining national community can generally be heard surrounding the Olympic Games—the most nationalistic sporting spectacles in which the United States engages. Olympic dialogues about imagined communities inevitably involve conversations about the nature and meaning of race in the United States.¹⁷

These athletic debates over nationhood and race have historically been varnished with a lacquer of scientific validity. “Athletic records have every right to consideration as scientific data,” noted one commentator in a 1916 article in *The Scientific Monthly*, one of the official journals of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.¹⁸ The data generated by Olympic Games has frequently been linked to scientific claims about the basic nature of societies. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, pundits, social critics, scientists and the mass public in the United States and in many other nations came to believe that athletic performances provided scientific illumination about the fundamental natures of cultures. As one scientific popularizer put it in a 1919 essay in *National Geographic Magazine*, sport supplied “magic touchstones” for deciphering the meaning of cultures. Observing peoples’ games and sports revealed “the surest clues to how people live, and work, and think.” Sporting performances furnished facts for the “scientific comparison of cultures.”¹⁹

Olympic “facts,” in the estimation of many scientific and popular chroniclers, can be determined with a greater degree of objectivity than facts from other sporting competitions. These claims of objectivity rest on two foundations. First, the Olympic Games purport to provide the world’s most global laboratory for cultural comparison.²⁰ Second, the Olympics, at least from American perspectives, have been historically centered on track and field.²¹ The individual nature of performances, the prescribed and standardized distances and equipment, the stopwatches, and the long history of record-keeping in track and field have lent a patina of “objectivity” to comparisons of nation and race made in Olympic stadiums.²²

National Geographic’s contention about sport as a scientific measuring stick for cultures was accepted as a truism in the United States. Comparisons of races as well as cultures required only a small step.²³ W. Montague Cobb tried to warn observers from taking that step. “As the anthropologist surveys the striving field in the stadium, he sees

nothing to suggest an association between race and competition in any particular event," Cobb asserted.²⁴ Cobb knew that very few others shared his views on that score. He understood that many anthropologists, the vast majority of the press, and most people in the United States invariably saw associations between race and performance in Olympic races. That was why Cobb used historical and anatomical data about black Olympians in "Race and Runners" in order to refute the notion that nature rather than nurture was the primary force responsible for the creation of African-American champions. As Cobb's work illustrates, statistics from Olympic performances generated dialogues in the United States about national prowess and its relation to race. If sport did indeed provide a "magic touchstone" for understanding the nature of a civilization then the victories by Owens and other "black auxiliaries" created data that meant something important to American civilization—a civilization in which race was a crucial factor for national self-definition.

Historians have traced some of the history of Owens' Olympic victories on American ideas about race. They have charted the scientific racism that before World War II served as modern scientific orthodoxy.²⁵ However, they have not yet addressed the role that Owens and other Olympic athletes played in scientific debates about race and national vigor. Between the inception of the modern Games in 1896 and the 1950s Olympians were critical figures in American dialogues about race and nationhood. Data from the Olympic Games served those who wanted to perpetuate scientific doctrines of racial supremacy as well as those who sought to shatter such concepts.

Although they read the data in different ways, intellectual elites, popular journalists, and the mass public all believed that Owens' medals signified something important about race. Indeed, looking for data about race in Olympic arenas had consumed American audiences for four decades by the time that Owens sprinted into history at Berlin. What does race have to do with winning Olympic races?²⁶ Why do certain people win Olympic medals? Americans had asked those questions long before Owens streaked to victory in Berlin. Indeed, those questions have intrigued modern cultures since the Baron Pierre de Coubertin and his elite cabal of European and North American sportsmen revived the Olympic Games at Athens in 1896. More than a century later the Olympics continue to fascinate and trouble modern minds.²⁷

Data from the first five Olympic Games—at Athens in 1896, Paris in 1900, St. Louis in 1904, London in 1908, and Stockholm in 1912—convinced many American Olympic commentators that in the words of the liberal Protestant weekly, *The Independent*, the "United States owes its supremacy over all other nations to the fact that it is a union of all races."²⁸ That claim, that in Olympic stadiums the United States vanquished the rest of the globe because American civilization incorporated all of the world's races into a distinctive American race, dominated American interpretations of their Olympic victories.²⁹ It reverberated in spite of the fact that the claim was suspect at many levels. Turn-of-the-century American sporting institutions were, if not completely then rather rigidly, segregated by race. They always had been—as had the rest of American civilization. Non-European peoples were blocked from many mainstream sporting opportunities. European ethnics from non-western or northern European origins also faced discrimination in American sport. Non-Protestant European groups could point to compelling evidence of invidious bigotry on American playing fields. In spite of the fact that athletes of Irish de-

scent won numerous medals for the United States at the first five Olympic Games, they still found their heritage was at times still a hindrance in American society.³⁰

Further clouding the issue was the fact the United States did not conquer the rest of the world in the first five Olympic Games. In spite of the problematic calculations, the image of “melting pot” champions—of an American team forged of many races into one world-dominating people—became twentieth-century American folk wisdom. Most American commentators read the data in ways that celebrated national prowess. They submerged the actualities of American race relations and Olympic performances into a set of statistics that proved that American strength lay in racial multiplicity and equality of opportunity for all races. It was an important ideal—if not a reality. It meant that sport could be used to challenge American failures to live up to that ideal and to struggle to meet it. In a century of American Olympic interpretation, *The Independent's* idealized explanation of American prowess as belonging to “a union of all races” has been a dominant motif.³¹

American Interpretations of Olympic Data and Race, 1896-1920

Underneath the Olympian theme of the United States as a “union of all races” ran countervailing currents. This particular interpretation of Olympic data ran contrary to the prevailing scientific theories regarding race and athletic prowess. The reigning scientific paradigm asserted that Europeans, especially northern Europeans, were the globe’s dominant race—on the playing field or battlefield, in scholarly debate or scientific expertise, in economic competition or political acumen. For much of the first half of the twentieth century the standard ideas of racial science did not square with the Olympic image of the United States as an amalgam of races.

Under the guise of science some thinkers sought to refute the idea that racial pluralism fueled American athletic prowess. From the 1870s through the 1930s scientific theories that asserted that races differed markedly in intelligence, athletic ability and other characteristics remained an accepted part of scientific orthodoxy.³² Determined to prove that evolution clearly endowed certain races with special genetic attributes, many American scientists practiced “high brow racism.”³³ Scientific racism, an organized and systematic intellectual endeavor that claimed the legitimacy of that favorite modern habit of mind—science—was comfortably ensconced in American universities, corporate board rooms, editorial offices, and government agencies. Mainstream biological, psychological, sociological and anthropological scholarship accepted many of the doctrines of scientific racism. Scientific racists tried to reach the mass public by packaging their prejudices in essays about subjects that they thought would appeal to plain folk. Olympic sport provided them with the opportunities they sought.

At the 1904 Olympics in St. Louis a group of athletic experts and anthropologists conducted a bizarre experiment on the role of race, culture, and nature in determining athletic performance. The St. Louis Games were a component of a larger event—a world’s fair dubbed the Centennial Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The anthropological division at the fair constructed a human zoo for exhibiting to a “civilized” American audience more than two thousand “primitives” from territories recently conquered by the United States in the Philippines and the Pacific, from older conquered territories in North America inhabited by Native Americans, and from South America and Africa.³⁴

Reacting to a claim from the anthropological scientists that “primitives” living as they allegedly did in close proximity to nature were superior athletes to the overly “civilized” peoples of Western industrial nations, Olympic organizers staged a “savage Olympics” to test that theory. The “Tribal Games,” promoted extensively in the St. Louis press, “proved” that non-European aborigines were not very good at Euro-American athletic games and sports—something that should have come as no surprise to “scientists” who knew that the aborigines had no experience playing any of those games.³⁵ Experts proclaimed that Anthropology Days—as the strange Olympics were officially labeled—would once and for all put to rest the idea of “natural” athletes. Of course it did not, as track coach Dean Cromwell’s 1941 invocation of that theory to explain the prowess of Jesse Owens and other African-American Olympians in a textbook on track and field techniques makes clear.³⁶ Even in the twenty-first century people still speculate that nature has made some races—by which they generally mean less “civilized” peoples who allegedly spent more evolutionary time closer to “nature”—better natural athletes than other races.³⁷

While much of the American press cheered that the United States had trounced the virtually nonexistent competition from the rest of the world because the American team was composed of a mythical “union of all races,” a few observers used the “scientific” results from the “savage Olympics” to promote an ideology of white supremacy. James Edward Sullivan, the American athletic official who organized and oversaw the St. Louis Olympics announced that from a “scientific standpoint” Anthropology Days revealed “conclusively that the average savage or foreigner is not equal to the white man.” The cultural anthropologist WJ McGee, who headed the anthropology section at the St. Louis Fair, agreed. The “savage Olympics,” merely generated data for “what anthropologists have long known, that the white man leads the races of the world, both physically and mentally, and in the coordination of the two which goes to make up the best specimen of manhood, they have the ‘spirit and the sand,’” McGee concluded.³⁸

After 1904 the scientific racism that colored interpretations of Anthropology Days persistently reappeared in American explanations of Olympic performance. Using measurements from the 1906 “interim” Olympics at Athens³⁹ and the 1908 Olympics at London, Dr. Charles E. Woodruff of the United States Army medical corps, argued that race provided the crucial clue in untangling the mysteries surrounding Olympic performances.⁴⁰ Woodruff embarked on a scientific study of the racial characteristics of American Olympic winners from the 1906 and 1908 teams. Woodruff was especially interested in one marker of race—“the pigmentation of the skin.” Woodruff’s elaborate combination of scientific racism and Olympic performance marked an important dissent from media depictions of America’s melting-pot victors.⁴¹

Strangely, at first glance, Woodruff’s data seemed to confirm the melting pot thesis. Woodruff’s studies asserted that members of “old American families” were notably absent from the list of Olympic victors. American winners came from families who had immigrated since 1840. The champions generally were from the first or second generation born in an American environment. Instead of celebrating the contributions of immigrants to American society or the Americanizing force of sport, Woodruff made it acutely clear that American champions did not come from the ethnic groups which comprised the “new immigration” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—eastern and south-

ern Europeans. Woodruff alleged that light-skinned, blonde-haired Nordic types supplied the majority of champion athletes in Olympic competition.⁴²

Woodruff divided American Olympians into the typical categories used by turn-of-the-century scientists for delineating race, such as Baltic and Alpine types, even an “old English dark type.” He assumed that northern European types were superior human beings. He insisted that “nature’s selective process” fit certain racial types for certain climates. In explaining the preponderance of immigrants and first or second generation Americans among the winners he pointed to the effect of climate on strenuousness.⁴³ The “light” of American skies gave an enormous stimulus to the nervous system of Nordic immigrants during their first few generations in the New World argued Woodruff.⁴⁴ That fact explained the American dominance in events that required a great deal of nervous energy—sprints, jumps and other field events. Indeed, Woodruff argued that light-induced “nervousness” provided “the basis of the strenuous life” and explained the “athletic craze” in American civilization.⁴⁵

The excessive stimulation of American “light” soon burned out the Nordic stock rendering families who had resided in the New World for any length of time incapable of producing champion athletes. The farther south Nordic families settled, the quicker the sun destroyed their vitality. He pointed to the rarity of athletes from the American South in the ranks of Olympic champions as proof that northern Europeans declined quickly in warmer environments. Woodruff even theorized that “the athletic superiority of the ancient Greeks is curiously like that of our own, for they too were Aryan northerners who had migrated to a stimulating climate.”⁴⁶

In order to make his case Woodruff created a chart of the points won by various nations to prove the superiority of northern Europeans. His efforts to support his contentions with empirical evidence in the form of statistical tabulations of the number of medals actually won by various nations in Olympic competitions would be duplicated in the future by many other theorists of race and athletic performance.⁴⁷ Such counting represented a simplistic, indeed a simple-minded, approach to the data⁴⁸—and a remarkably popular one as well.⁴⁹

Woodruff dismissed the idea that an American race was emerging from some supposed union of all races as unscientific sentimentalism. Olympic “facts” needed to be “taken to heart by those who think we are evolving a new type of humanity to be called the ‘American’—a type fit to live anywhere from Florida to Alaska,” lectured Woodruff. “Such a type is impossible,” the doctor concluded. “Nature is merely permitting the types fitted to each locality to survive, and she lets the others die off.”⁵⁰

Woodruff drew a number of political conclusions from his theory. He declared that “young America” and “old Europe” represented literal social conditions. Young Nordic men led American society before the “light” of the New World broke them down. Old Nordic men endured to lead the Old World. Woodruff worried that as the sun sucked the life-force out of overstimulated northern European ethnics they would be unable to continue functioning in their “natural” roles as the governors of American society. In Woodruff’s slanted version of history “the big brawny northmen” who were the “real Arya of our philologists” had “been the world’s rulers from time immemorial.” Woodruff suggested that “if America is to be at the front of civilization with the other advanced nations, its

blood must be constantly recruited from Northern Europe” to replace the constantly degenerating American Nordic stock.⁵¹

Woodruff's conclusions and his data were not necessarily consistent. In spite of his belief in Nordic supremacy he noted that many of the American winners were not of the “blonde type”—an anomaly in the data for which he never accounted.⁵² His Nordic interpretation of American Olympic success was a flawed dissent to the typical media exaltations lauding American champions of the melting pot.⁵³ It was also typical of the scientific racism that permeated American thought in the first half of the twentieth century. The *New York Times* described Woodruff's work as “highly interesting and mainly scientific racial studies.” While the newspaper warned readers that “it is possible, indeed, all but certain,” that Dr. Woodruff had in his “scientific” studies “exaggerated a half truth,” it nevertheless approved his central thesis that athletic performance highlighted racial differences.⁵⁴ *National Geographic* concurred. The popular scientific monthly opined that Woodruff offered “stimulating, even disquieting, investigation” of the supremacy of the “blonde” race while at the same time demanding that “he should be more logical and more systematic in the arrangement of his evidence.”⁵⁵ Woodruff extended his investigations of sport and racial vitality in a 1909 book entitled *The Expansion of Races*, hailed in some quarters as “the most important contribution to the literature of anthropology since Darwin's *Origin of Species*.”⁵⁶ In *The Expansion of Races* Woodruff revealed himself as an ardent Malthusian and a committed Aryan supremacist who believed that northern European peoples had a duty to rule the world. Race problems in the United States would disappear, Woodruff argued, as science destroyed faith in the melting pot and as the African-American population dwindled to extinction in an era in which the former slaves were no longer insulated from the struggle for survival by benevolent masters. He predicted that a new world order with Aryans controlling the lesser races would be soon be forged by athletically trained Nordic “blonde beasts.” Among the “scientific” evidence Woodruff cited to support his views were Percival Lowell's theories about “canals” indicating the triumph of a superior, globe-dominating race on Mars.⁵⁷ The flyleaf of Woodruff's *The Expansion of Races* proudly boasted his membership in the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. The book was well-received in scientific circles. In Europe, German eugenicists endorsed Woodruff's studies without reservation.⁵⁸

New Data Sets, Theories of Nordic Supremacy, and the Anomaly of

Boughera El Ouafi, 1920-1930

Eugenic and racist investigations of Olympic data multiplied during the 1920s and 1930s. The sixth Olympic Games, scheduled for Berlin in 1916, were casualties of global warfare. The International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) revived the Games after the Great War and held them at Antwerp in 1920, Paris in 1924, Amsterdam in 1928, Los Angeles in 1932, and Berlin in 1936. The outbreak of World War II scuttled the 1940 Olympic Games, slated for Tokyo. The I.O.C. also began a series of Winter Olympic Games in 1924.

In the wake of World War I, the scientific community expanded its interest in the data from Olympic Games. Many American scholars remained wedded to the doctrines

of scientific racism. Massive batteries of “intelligence tests” administered to American armed services recruits during World War I seemed to offer empirical data that race determined potential cognitive ability. Eugenics studies provided “proof” that mental and physical health sprang from hereditary, and therefore racial, sources. Based on faulty conceptions, poorly understood premises, and confused results, the new studies of the 1920s and 1930s continued to provide legitimacy for scientific bigotry.

Between the First and Second World Wars scientific racism counted major scholarly figures among its ranks. Racist science began to influence public policy. Congress created immigration quotas based on “national origin”—or more bluntly on race. State and federal governments enacted eugenics laws prohibiting interracial marriages and mandating the sterilization of the mentally, or racially, “incompetent.” A close reading of the 1925 “Scopes Monkey Trial,” generally depicted in American history as signaling the victory of science over religious superstition, illustrates the proliferation of scientific racism. The textbook that Dayton, Tennessee, high school biology teacher John T. Scopes used in his classes became a crucial piece of evidence for convicting him of teaching the forbidden doctrines of evolution. A few pages beyond the unit on evolution appeared a section entitled “The Races of Man.” The book specified five human races that each existed on different evolutionary planes. It then assured students that “Caucasians” were at the pinnacle of the evolutionary process. White supremacists did not have to join the “low brow” Ku Klux Klan when they had science on their side.⁵⁹

Scientific racism remained difficult to shatter in Olympic arenas as well. In the 1920s the official journal of the Ecological Society of America, *Ecology*, published an essay by an Argentine meteorologist that “proved” statistically that northern Europeans were the world’s dominant athletes. In “The International Olympic Games as an Index to the Influence of Climate on Human Energy,” Guillermo Hoxmark tabulated the number of points won by nations in the Olympic Games of 1920 and 1924. He then correlated each nation’s point total with its population. Hoxmark created a series of statistical tables that indicated how many thousands of inhabitants each nation had per Olympic point won. The lower the number (the fewer thousands of people who produced gold medals), the greater the athletic performance. He then connected his measurement of athletic performances to mean temperatures. He thought his data offered “a good basis for an investigation of the effect of climatic factors on the constitution and activity of man.”⁶⁰

Hoxmark’s statistics indicated that “physical strength and athletic prowess” belonged to peoples from the cool climates of northern Europe. Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Estonia topped his list.⁶¹ He did not draw any political conclusions from his study, although in the context of early twentieth-century Latin American and especially Argentine thought the idea that indigenous American peoples from the warm climates were slow and inferior and northern Europeans vigorous and dominant shaped political “science.”⁶² In the course of his essay Hoxmark also praised the work of Ellsworth Huntington. A well-regarded social scientist in the United States, Huntington’s *Civilization and Climate* (1915) and *The Character of Races* (1924) were classics in the field of scientific racism.⁶³ Like Hoxmark, Huntington drew extensive charts and maps of “human vigor” and “national character” that identified peoples of northern European descent as the “fittest” members of the human species.⁶⁴ During the 1920s Huntington, a Yale professor of

geography, served as the president of the American Eugenics Society and demanded that racial science determine United States immigration policy in order to eugenically cleanse the "American race."⁶⁵ Hoxmark was more circumspect than Huntington. The Argentine scholar counseled continued study of the Olympics to verify his tentative conclusions about the connection between climatic ecology and human energy.⁶⁶

The popular press in the United States sometimes forgot Hoxmark's call for restraint in promoting Nordicism. Anticipating the 1924 Olympics in Paris the *Literary Digest* printed an ominously titled story, "Conquering North Threatens to Conquer Olympics." In the piece T. Von Ziekursch warned Americans that most Europeans believed that at the 1924 Olympics Finland would wrest the title of Olympic champions away from the United States. Northern climates produced "a hearty breed," reported Ziekursch. Nordics were stronger, more energetic, had more stamina, and were more virile than other people. Since at least the time of the Roman Empire, hypothesized Ziekursch, Nordics had periodically emerged from the woods to conquer the world in an "avalanche of ... power."⁶⁷

Once upon a time, lamented Ziekursch, the United States had possessed an "ecology"—the frontier—that produced a virile race. In the Olympics contested between 1896 and 1912, when America had just recently been a "pioneer land," American "athletes were sons of men who were not hot-house plants, the products of super-heated offices, and no exercise." Ziekursch's potent mixture of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis with Euro-American theories of Nordic supremacy led him to predict that at the Paris Olympics Finland would conquer a modernized, effeminate, and polyglot United States.⁶⁸ In fact the United States turned back Finland's challenge and dominated the 1924 Olympics. Following tradition, some in the American media labeled the United States team "melting pot" victors.⁶⁹ A few echoes of the old "union of all races" rhetoric reappeared. "Our athletes represent selections from many strains; they are the product of the crossbreeding and transplanting of the most virile European races," wrote one Eurocentric American commentator.⁷⁰

The vast majority of accounts in the American press celebrated national dominance. However, a few critics took a more "scientific" view of the results.⁷¹ A strong current of Nordicism ran through the dissenters' opinions. Anticipating by one year Hoxmark's creation of population-to-medal-production formula, *Current Opinion* rearranged the 1924 Winter and Summer Games national standings to reflect the population-base from which each nation drew its team. In *Current Opinion's* tables Norway led the world in per-capita medal production with 84.5 points, followed by Finland's 76.5, Sweden's 50.5 and Switzerland's 49. The United States finished fourteenth with 6.1 points. *Current Opinion* refrained from Nordic-style scientific racism in drawing conclusions from the data. Instead, the editors theorized that the Scandinavian countries owed their successes to the mass democracy of Nordic sport. American athletes were products of an undemocratic system. They were "specialists intensively and scientifically trained, instead of supreme products of universal athletic activity."⁷²

In 1928 at Amsterdam the United States again, according to national media accounts, bested Finland in total medals but lost the race on a medals-produced-per-capita basis. "Taking population into account," grouched *The World's Work*, "we did only a little better

than Germany and nowhere near so well as Finland.⁷³ “Scientific” charts of Olympic performance threatened to dominate analyses of national athletic prowess.

Finland’s strong showing in Olympic track and field in the 1920s sparked a media frenzy in the United States.⁷⁴ Finnish victories fascinated American audiences.⁷⁵ Why did Americans exult in Finland’s Olympic successes?⁷⁶ Part of the reason was the fact that Finland was the only nation in Europe that paid back the debts it owed the United States from World War I. Part of the reason, given the anti-Bolshevist climate of the 1920s, was that the Finnish civil war had ended in defeat for the communists. Another important reason was the projection of traditional explanations of American success onto Finland. Americans had convinced themselves that democratic institutions, rugged individualism, frontier vigor, and the ability to compete with the forces of history and nature produced Olympic triumph. The press made Finland into a European version of the United States. Lurking beneath all the other reasons lay the popularity of scientific racism in the United States. A strong current of Nordicism ran through the explanations of Finnish athletic genius. Finland’s triumphs became another manifestation of the “avalanche” of white European power that seemed destined to the rule the world.

Nordic athletic prowess confirmed for many scholars the validity of scientific theories regarding the superiority of northern European genes. Nordic minds and bodies dominated the Olympics, and by extension, most other human endeavors. The Olympic Games of 1928 provided one contrary data set. An Algerian running for France won the Marathon race. The *Chicago Defender*, one of the nation’s major African-American newspapers, pointed out that the “brown-skinned Algerian Arab” was closely followed across the finish line by a “dark-skinned Chilean.” Japanese racers finished fourth and sixth.⁷⁷ Other stories in the African-American press also noted how Boughera El Ouafi’s Marathon victory had undermined the standard racial calculus employed by athletic experts. Columnist Chester L. Washington of the *Pittsburgh Courier* observed that the Algerian’s name on the list of Olympic Marathon champions “was just about as noticeable as Marcus Garvey’s



Boughera El Ouafi became the first non-European to win an Olympic Marathon race. The Algerian runner competed for France in the 1928 Olympic Games. This photograph of El Ouafi appeared in *Report of the American Olympic Committee: Ninth Olympic Games, Amsterdam, 1928; Second Olympic Winter Games, St. Moritz, 1928* (New York: American Olympic Committee), 134.

name would be on a Lily White ticket as an American presidential candidate.”⁷⁸ *The Negro World*, the voice of Marcus Garvey’s black nationalist movement, argued that El Ouafi’s Marathon victory disproved all claims of Nordic supremacy. The newspaper’s editors noted that Africa teemed with athletes who could best the peoples of European descent if given a chance. “Some day Africans will have a flag to worship, to uphold the honor of which they will be willing to give of their best, and when that day comes achievements like El Ouafi’s will be commonplace,” proclaimed *The Negro World*.⁷⁹

News of El Ouafi’s victory coincided with widespread coverage in the African-American press of sociologist R.D. McKenzie’s⁸⁰ claim at an academic conference in Massachusetts that Nordic supremacy theories were pernicious fallacies and that race had no utility as a scientific concept.⁸¹ Some newspapers linked the two events even though McKenzie had not explicitly made the connection. “Olympic Results Hurt Nordic Pride, Scientists Declares,” blared a headline in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. “White Man ‘Just Lucky! Says Professor As Tally of Achievements at Amsterdam Is Taken” read the subhead. The article noted that some of McKenzie’s academic colleagues rejected his ideas, “but when they left his round table the newspapers were carrying the news that the marathon, requiring an amount of stamina and endurance sometimes regarded as a distinctively Nordic attribute, had been won by a brown-sinned Algerian Arab, with a dark-skinned Chilean second, and two yellow-skinned Japanese fourth and sixth, while the white race had to be content with third and fifth places.”⁸²

The racial implications of El Ouafi’s Marathon victory made much less of an impact in the mainstream white press in spite of the obsessions of many sports reporters in the 1920s with explaining Nordic supremacy in Olympic races.⁸³ Still, an editorial by the title of “Bow Ye Nordics!” appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune*. This editorial also linked the Marathon results with McKenzie’s remarks. The editors of the *Herald Tribune* were less optimistic than accounts in the African-American press about the power of El Ouafi’s victory to alter long-standing racial mythologies. “It is safe to say that the myth of Nordic supremacy, so sedulously fostered by pseudo ethnologists, will survive this jolt, as it has so many others, even in the subconsciousness of the non-Nordic,” opined the editors. “For it takes more than a single adverse demonstration—more than a series of such demonstrations, unless of overwhelming proportions and persistence—to dislodge either a superiority or inferiority complex.”⁸⁴

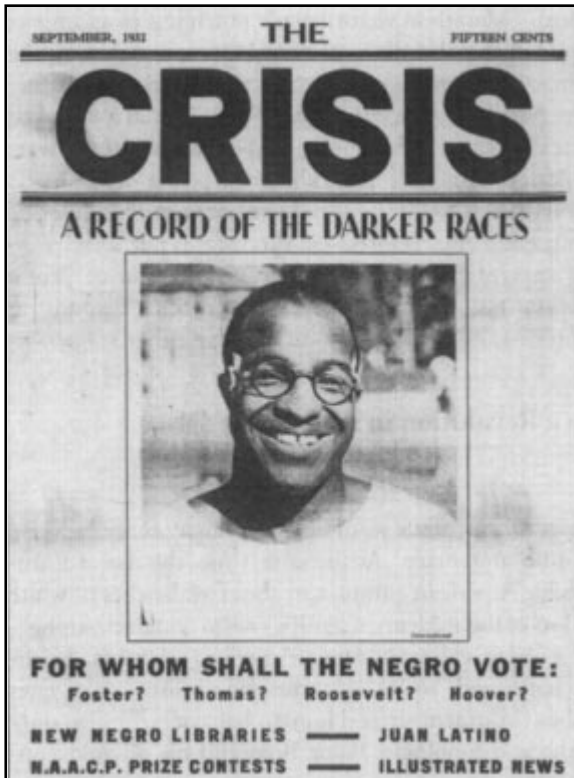
From the Puzzle of El Ouafi to a Revolution in Athletic Racial

Science, 1930-1936

Results from the Olympic Games of the 1930s would provide many more “adverse demonstration[s]” to theories of Nordic supremacy. At the same time, the rise of European fascism in the 1930s would subdue American enthusiasm about avalanches of white power. Still, in the comfortable corridors of the academy, scientific racism remained strongly rooted among not only German but a certain cohort of Anglo-American scientists. Scientific racism appealed to both those “hard” and “social” scientists who insisted that genes and heredity rather than culture and environment shaped human behaviors.⁸⁵ Certainly some American scientists, notably the anthropologist Franz Boas and his disciples, op-

posed scientific racism.⁸⁶ During the 1930s it became a much more contentious issue between practitioners of differing scientific paradigms. Yet scientific racism maintained a powerful grip on many “liberal” geneticists, physiologists, biologists, psychologists and sociologists.

During the 1930s the racial science surrounding athletic performance underwent a radical paradigm shift. El Ouafi’s Marathon run turned out to be a harbinger of the near rather than the distant future. The older paradigm that linked white athletic prowess with superior intellects and wills as well as with better bodies through the hegemony of European genes was swamped by new data of such “overwhelming proportions and persistence”—to borrow the *New York Herald Tribune’s* language—that it began to crumble. A new paradigm emerged. Scientists interested in reading racial distinctions in sporting performances began to proclaim the superiority of black physiology. At the same time they separated African athletic genes from intellects and wills. Sporting performances that in the past had been credited to combinations of mental and physical genius became in the new paradigm purely physiological phenomena. The old mythology of the “natural athlete,” at one time thoroughly refuted by the “experiments” at the 1904 “savage Olympics” and more than two decades of scientific ardor for Nordicism, would be resurrected to explain new data.



The September 1932 issue of *The Crisis* featured Olympic hero Eddie Tolan as well as advice for voters in the 1932 presidential election. *The Crisis* 39 (September 1932), front cover.

At the same time, African-American medals harvested in Olympic arenas rekindled the “union of all races” ideology that shaped American perceptions of sports.⁸⁷ The 1932 and 1936 Olympic Games encouraged many who hoped that African-American athletic victories would promote the idea that the races were essentially equal. Paradoxically, as African Americans began in the 1930s to play prominent roles on American Olympic teams, the new paradigm infusing racial science would undermine the notion that their triumphs were indisputable evidence of racial equality.⁸⁸

In 1932 the Olympic Games returned for the first time since 1904 to the United States. Four years later at the Berlin Olympics much of the American press and public would exult that African-American victories had shattered Nazi theories of white supremacy. At the Los Angeles Games a somewhat different climate prevailed. Given both the obvious and subtle realities of American systems of racial apartheid that existed in 1932, celebrations of African-American triumphs in Los Angeles as shattering American ideas of racial supremacy were much more muted.⁸⁹

In his nearly-universally syndicated column the comic-philosopher Will Rogers jested that “the man that brought the first ‘slaves’ to this country must have had these Olympic Games in mind, for these ‘senegambians’ have just run the white man ragged. Every winner is either an American Negro or an American white woman,” Rogers noted. “Wait till we get to golf, bridge or cocktail shaking, then the American white man will come into his own.”⁹⁰ Much of white America ignored the social implications of Rogers’ Olympic sarcasm. When some officials in Germany complained about having to compete against African Americans at the Los Angeles Games the mainstream press mostly disregarded the German objection.⁹¹

The white press did not completely ignore Los Angeles’ “black auxiliaries.” The gold medals in the 100-meter and 200-meter dashes earned by Eddie Tolan, the silver and bronze medals in the same races garnered by Ralph Metcalfe, Edward Gordon’s gold in the long jump, as well as African-Canadian Phil Edwards bronze in the 800-meters were duly noted. The mainstream media simply refused to draw conclusions about the shattering of any American racial mythologies at the Los Angeles Olympics. Unlike Jesse Owens’ later accomplishments, Tolan’s and Metcalfe’s feats did not spark widespread discussion in white mainstream America about racial equality or any ideologies of white supremacy-not Aryanism, nor Nordicism, nor Jim Crow.⁹²

There were a few quiet allusions to the ironies of using African-American Olympians to construct a national identity while at the same time practicing discrimination and segregation against black citizens. Ralph Metcalfe received some accolades even in the heart of Jim Crow territory. In Atlanta, Georgians were called upon to recognize their native-born son. Prohibited by segregation from Southern stadiums, Metcalfe had joined an athletic “great migration North” and won athletic fame at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁹³ Not only in the American South, but throughout the United States, the words of Atlanta Mayor James Lee Key on “Ralph Metcalfe Day” signaled the resounding silence to the “race question” with which much of the nation received 1932’s “black auxiliaries.” On September 23, 1932, Mayor Key asked white as well as black Atlantans to pay homage to Metcalfe in “such a manner as to give due recognition to the internationally known athlete who was born in Atlanta, and who, if he had remained here,

would probably have been a rose ‘born to blush unseen, its fragrance wasted on the desert air.’”⁹⁴ An Olympics contested on American soil did not provide the proper conditions to shatter domestic myths of white supremacy.

Still, a few commentators utilized the 1932 Olympics to assail American racism. The African-American press used data from Los Angeles to rail against segregation and discrimination. African-American writers generally employed the old “union of all races” motif to put black victories into perspective. Eddie Tolan’s picture graced the cover of the September 1932 issue of *The Crisis*—the era’s leading voice for civil rights and the official journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.). Inside the magazine the editors proclaimed that the man who had been “the victim of a brazen discrimination and Jim Crow snobbishness” by his American teammates at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam was now an American Olympic hero.⁹⁵ *The Crisis* also announced that Michigan had declared an “Eddie Tolan day” to celebrate the feats of the University of Michigan star.⁹⁶

For some in the African-American community Tolan’s and Metcalfe’s starring roles in the Los Angeles Olympics marked an important step forward in the struggle for civil rights. Charles Williams, writing in *The Southern Workman*, estimated that Tolan’s and Metcalfe’s heroics had been witnessed by a hundred thousand in the Los Angeles Coliseum and by many millions who listened on the radio or read the newspaper accounts. Williams cheered that “it was the performances of the American Negro that held the spotlight and gave Americans just cause to be proud.” Williams claimed that the two African-American runners garnered more attention than any other Olympians who competed in Los Angeles. He predicted that Tolan and Metcalfe would become American heroes who inspired the nation’s youth to seize opportunities “for the ‘honor of their country and for the glory of sport.’”⁹⁷

Williams’ method of using African-American Olympians to construct a more inclusive model of American nationhood while at the same time using them to deconstruct doctrines of white racial superiority proved to be a popular technique. Elmer A. Carter, in an essay in the *Journal of Negro Life*, pointed out that for much of American history the idea “that the Negro was deficient in the qualities of which athletic champions are made was long one of the accepted shibboleths of the American people.” Carter noted many in the United States did not think African Americans had the right constitution for athletic prowess. “That rare combination—stamina, skill, and courage, it was commonly believed were seldom found under a black skin.” Carter asserted that the performances of the black Olympians in 1932 “exploded” those older notions.⁹⁸

The Los Angeles Olympics did in fact begin to explode older scientific notions about racial difference as revealed in athletic performance. This explosion, however, would not move racial dialogues in the United States in the directions that Elmer Carter, Charles Williams, *The Crisis*, and other champions of civil rights desired. The data generated by the 1932 Olympians, soon to be combined with data from the 1936 Olympics, would usher in a major paradigm shift. Claims of Nordic or more general European physical supremacy would fade as many in the scientific community began to speculate that the dominance of African-American Olympians in the sprints and certain jumps was a product of natural anatomical advantages rather than hard work, tenacity, and courage.

The new scientific paradigm would spawn a new American racial shibboleth. Underneath black skins in this new racial mythology resided not the reservoirs of courage and will power that had connected physical to cultural prowess in older theories of athletic genius but merely “athletic genes.”⁹⁹ Elmer Carter hoped that African-American Olympians would help “to attain equality by proof of equality” in the Los Angeles Coliseum.¹⁰⁰ The theories about athletic genes undermined those efforts. With the backing of science, the white majority in the United States could read black athletic prowess not as “proof of equality” but as genetic accident.¹⁰¹

W. Montague Cobb’s War on the New Paradigm and New Data

Sets from the “Nazi Olympics,” 1936

Construction on the new paradigm began quickly. Noting in the wake of the Los Angeles Games that African-American athletes were superior sprinters, Robert L. Browne in the *Research Quarterly of the American Physical Education Association* attributed black athletic prowess to unique “neuro-muscular characteristics” that made blacks superior short-distance runners and long-jumpers.¹⁰² Additional studies by other researchers began to build the case for “natural” black athletic superiority.¹⁰³

These studies quickly crossed the boundary from scientific to popular culture. The African-American physical anthropologist W. Montague Cobb was distressed by the rise of the new paradigm. Cobb noted that in the wake of outstanding performances by black athletes in the 1932 Olympics and in other track and field competitions in the early 1930s, the scientific and popular presses had in many cases “directly ascribed” black prowess to racially-based anatomical differences “or implied in some way it has been due to racial characteristics.”¹⁰⁴ Cobb’s fears were confirmed in the writings of Frederick Lewis Allen, the best-selling chronicler of American trends and, generally, a supporter of civil rights struggles.¹⁰⁵ In a preview of the 1936 Olympics Allen opined that “one of the most interesting athletic phenomena of our time is the emergence of American Negroes as the best sprinters and jumpers in the world.” Allen argued that the rise to supremacy of black Olympians was “chiefly a sociological phenomenon.” Still, he felt obliged to mention the new scientific speculation about specialized black anatomy that might perhaps explain black superiority.¹⁰⁶

With the 1936 Olympic Games approaching and fresh cohort of African-American Olympians preparing to win medals, Cobb waged war against the “wide circulation” of the new scientific paradigm. Marshaling athletic, anthropological, historical, and scientific evidence, he asserted that the new theories of black athletic superiority were as illogical and unfounded as the older theories of white athletic supremacy. Cobb insisted that “a careful appraisal of the facts” would reveal the new paradigm to be without merit.¹⁰⁷

To make his case Cobb offered the American public a history lesson. The 1932 African-American Olympians were not the first blacks to prove their prowess in track and field events. Cobb traced the lineage of black sprinting and long jumping champions back to early twentieth-century American Olympian Howard Drew. He noted that the number of world-class black competitors had been steadily increasing since early in the century as social barriers to African-American participation in track and field fell. Several black

sprinting and jumping stars in the 1920s had prepared the way for the rise of black stars in the 1930s. Cobb also made the point that African Americans had a long and impressive history in track and field events beyond the sprints and long jump—in distance races, the hurdles, weight-throwing events, and multiple-skill competitions such as the decathlon.¹⁰⁸ In the early 1920s Cobb himself had been a collegiate cross-country champion at Amherst College.¹⁰⁹ The general ignorance of this particular history accounted for the fact that many Americans believed that black athletes had burst suddenly onto the Olympic scene. That same ignorance “probably stimulated the notion that these stars might owe their success to some physical attributes peculiar to their race.”¹¹⁰

In order to reinforce his historical demolition of the myth of a genetic black athletic superiority, Cobb returned to the older paradigms of white physical supremacy. He pointed out that the accomplishments of earlier ethnic groups in particular Olympic track and field events, most notably Irish Americans in the field events and the Finns in distance running, had sparked suggestions of racial superiority. Time, and a lack of scientific evidence, had consigned those notions to racial fantasy. Cobb thought the new paradigm of black supremacy would meet a similar fate.¹¹¹

Cobb next turned to his scholarly strength, physical anthropology, to dissect the idea that blacks had a special racial anatomy that accounted for their prowess in sprinting and long jumping. He began this assault on the new paradigm by admitting that if a track coach could come up with an ideal body for a sprinter and a physical anthropologist could come up with an ideal body for the “American Negroid” and if the two ideal bodies matched then theories of black athletic genes would have merit. Cobb observed that a study of champion sprinters and long jumpers, both black and white, revealed a wide variety of body types—short and tall, lean and stocky, powerful and delicate. He also noted, drawing on his earlier scientific studies of the data,¹¹² that no single idealized anatomy for an “American Negroid” could be constructed. “The track coach cannot categorically describe the physique and character of the sprint champion, nor can the anthropologist define with useful accuracy the physique and character of the American Negro,” Cobb concluded.¹¹³

Cobb’s coup de grâce to the new paradigm was his own detailed study of the man who would become the symbol of African-American Olympic prowess a few months later, Jesse Owens. Cobb cleverly rebutted the science of superior black calves, Achilles tendons, and feet, promoted by Robert L. Browne and other scholars. Cobb’s own study of Owens’ anatomy led Cobb to the conclusion that Owens’ possessed “Caucasoid” rather than “Negroid” calves, Achilles tendons, and feet. Cobb also noted that Japan’s “Asiatic” Chuhei Nambu, a world-record holder in the long jump in the early 1930s, came from a “race” that was supposedly anatomically disadvantaged in the calves, Achilles tendons, and feet for that event.¹¹⁴

Cobb finished his argument by asserting that “there is not a single physical characteristic which all the Negro stars have in common which definitely classify them as Negroes.” Cultural and social forces, not athletic genes, accounted for the rise of Owens and his fellow cohort of African-American track and field stars. The attribution of racial qualities on the basis of athletic performance did not stand up to Cobb’s inspection of the facts. Cobb wearily added that the very act of seeing the Olympic Games as a racial data set

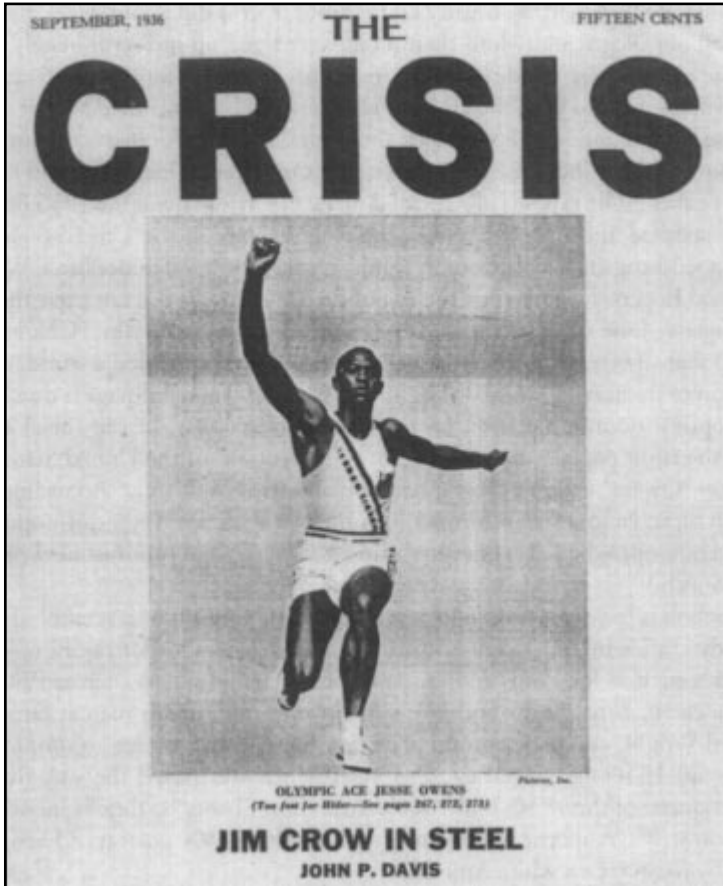
revealed more about American history and culture than it did about genes and anatomy. "In fact if all our Negro and white champions were lined up indiscriminately for inspection, no one except those conditioned by American attitudes would suspect that race had anything whatever to do with the athletes' abilities," Cobb concluded.¹¹⁵

As Jesse Owens and his fellow "black auxiliaries" lined up for inspection in Berlin, the battles about racial distinctions, scientific paradigms, national identities, and athletic performances peaked. The exploits of African-American Olympians at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games sparked an important public dialogue on race in the United States.¹¹⁶ Will Rogers weighed-in again. "Talk about the Finns running, you watch Booker T. Washington's boys," opined Rogers.¹¹⁷ This time the rest of the white media did not leave the race issue to Will Rogers. Jesse Owens became an American legend at Berlin. Charles Williams proclaimed that Owens and African-American teammates "disclosed a world, or at least a large portion of it, growing more willing to pay homage where homage is due." Williams based his optimistic interpretation on the "glowing accounts" of the "black auxiliaries" carried on the front pages of newspapers in "every section" of the United States.¹¹⁸ William J. Baker, Owens' leading biographer, concurs with Williams. According to Baker, Owens' Olympic victories transformed him into an icon for American popular culture and pushed him onto the pages of even the most ardently segregationist newspapers in the American South.¹¹⁹

Most scholars have cast Owens as a race-relations pioneer. As a symbol of the changing racial dynamics in American culture, historians generally portray him, along with other athletes such as Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson, entertainers such as Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson, Lena Horne and Louis Armstrong, and literati such as James Baldwin and Richard Wright, as one of a group of extraordinary blacks whose accomplishments in the 1930s and 1940s impressed even white America and paved the way for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. American history textbooks mention Owens in that context.¹²⁰ A recent documentary about the 1930s portrays Owens as a hero welcomed by mainstream white America.¹²¹

While the traditional view of Owens and the other "black auxiliaries" as precursors of the civil rights era certainly has its merits, the racial debates sparked by Owens' four gold medals in 1936 produced a much more complicated legacy. Owens became a symbol to a variety of groups seeking to alter or defend American ideas about race. Both explicit and subtle racism shaped American views of his achievements. Still, some Americans found the "black auxiliaries" compelling evidence to shatter the older paradigms of scientific racists and promoters of Aryan and Nordic supremacy.

Shattered paradigms or not, Owens found his life limited by racism when he returned to the United States from Berlin. Hollywood did not want a black "Tarzan." Amateur athletic officials did not want a black sprinter who refused to do their bidding. Political operatives did not want a black leader who still supported the "party of Lincoln" against the growing power of the Democratic Party in African-American communities. In spite of those realities Owens still viewed himself as a racial trailblazer whose victories helped persuade many white Americans to extend the promises of equality and liberty to African Americans. He believed he ran not just toward the finish line but toward the abolition of the color line in American society.¹²²



Jesse Owens made the front cover of *The Crisis* in September 1936 with the comment that he was “Too fast for Hitler.” *The Crisis* 43 (September 1936), front cover.

Others agreed with Owens while expressing some reservations about athletes leading the civil rights cause. The editors of *The Crisis* heralded the accomplishments of African-American athletes in the struggle for equality with mixed emotions. Great African-American historians, philosophers, scientists or poets might be more important in many ways than athletes maintained the editors, but it would be “foolish” to think that scholars and artists had more influence on the general public than sports heroes and heroines. Besides, argued the editors, “it is not the infinitesimal intellectual America which needs conversion on the race problem; it is the rank and file.” In order to challenge racist stereotypes the rank and file needed athletic deeds rather than compelling words. “For these millions, who hold the solution of the race problem in their hands, the beautiful breasting of a tape by Jesse Owens and the thud of a glove on the hand of Joe Louis carry more ‘interracial education’ than all the erudite philosophy ever written on race,” concluded *The Crisis*.^{1 2 3}

Nordicism's Last Stand in Athletic Racial Science, 1936-1939

In spite of the editors' optimism, given the pervasiveness of "high brow" racism in the white regions of "infinitesimal intellectual America," conversion was necessary among the scientific and political elites as well.¹²⁴ Owens did not convince all Olympic observers. The older paradigm of a natural white athletic superiority made its last stand in the scientific literature in an effort to refute the common interpretations of the Olympic data generated by Jesse Owens and the "black auxiliaries." Dr. Charles D. Snyder, Professor of Experimental Physiology at Johns Hopkins University, translated the data from the Berlin Olympics as supporting rather than repudiating the claims of Nordic and Aryan racism.¹²⁵ In an article for the October 1936 issue of *The Scientific Monthly*, the well-respected journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Snyder set out to correlate Olympic victories with national population in order to construct an accurate index of national athletic power. "Perhaps it has occurred to others besides myself that the absolute scores accredited to the various countries in the Olympiad just ended in Berlin somehow do not represent their respective relative positions of excellence," began the professor. Snyder discovered proof of the "inferiority" of American athletes on Berlin's Olympic playing fields. His study claimed that northern Europeans were in fact a superior group.¹²⁶

In constructing his index Snyder used the populations of the competing nations and an Associated Press point system based on tabulating the Olympic medals garnered at Berlin. He then compiled a statistical formula that posited an "ideal" score based on the total number of points available at the Games and the combined populations of the participating countries. Snyder's statistical manipulations revealed an interesting pattern. Germany and the United States dropped from the Olympic lead to ninth and fourteenth places respectively in Snyder's formulations. At the top of the professor's list resided the "snug little countries of northern Europe."¹²⁷

Snyder sardonically remarked that "when Owens was winning his wonderful races a great cry went up in the American press proclaiming that once and for all the myth of superiority of one race over another had been smashed." While he admitted that blacks did well in short races, he noted that "we must remember that the Negro boys were trained by white men in the white man's institutions." Snyder argued that instead of the "Nazi Olympics" smashing the myth of racial superiority, a scientific understanding of the results proved that certain races were in fact superior. His research led him to conclude that the "great northern races" were racially dominant in sport. While noting that the little republics of northern Europe that topped his lists suffered relatively little political or economic instability, he insisted that racial purity was the key factor in their success. Snyder's position in the scientific controversies surrounding race was clear.¹²⁸

In the March 1938 issue of *Scientific Monthly*, Snyder elaborated his racial theories.¹²⁹ In an article entitled "A Study in the Demographic Distribution of Cultural Achievement," he tried to lend an aura of objectivity to his hypotheses by asserting that in examining national character "it goes without saying that the most reliable of all these studies are those that have been carried out with the spirit and the techniques of modern science." To measure cultural achievement he focused his understanding of modern scientific technique on three categories of national standing. He measured the distribution of the 159

DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF RATINGS EXPRESSED AS PER CENT. OF THE IDEAL ALLOTMENT AS
REALIZED BY THE ACTUAL ALLOTMENT*

Political groups ^a	Nobel prizes (1901-1937)	Biographical sketches, Intern. W. W. (1937)	Olympic games (1912-1936)	Average of all three ratings
Sweden	987	650	638	758
Norway	1048	670	266	636
Switzerland	1138	495	309	625
Denmark	1112	794	46	622
Finland	0	367	1295	554
Holland	443	323	529	432
Austria	470	286	470	409
Estonia	0	10 ^a	1102	371
Hungary	66	306	701	358
Great Britain and all Ireland ...	298	431 ^b	64	265
New Zealand	0	54	778	261
Germany	328	152	291	257
France	273	276	123	254
Belgium	318	191	49	190
U. S. of America and Canada ..	82	147	133	121
Italy	62	107	122	97
Argentina	53	20 ^a	185	87
Czechoslovakia	0	139	96	79
Poland	42	93	46	61
Yugoslavia	0	142	12	52
Spain	50	62	0	37
Russia and U. S. S. R.	8	12	0	7
India	4	5	4	4

* The order of listing the various nations in Table 3 is determined by the order of excellence, as indicated by the average of all three ratings and as shown in the last column of the table. Of the nations who failed to score in any one of the three categories only those who were honored with the Nobel Prize distinction, or who did exceptionally well in at least one of the other two categories, are included in Table 3.

^a This figure is based partly on an arbitrary datum, the exact one not being at hand.

^b See footnote c, Table 1.

* The mean of the per cent. of ideal realized by actual records and by all-events, as given in Table 2, gives the general mean-rating in sports for each country.

Snyder's table on the "Distribution of Cultural Achievement" ranked "political groups" on the basis of their per-capita production of Nobel Prize winners, biographical sketches in the *International Who's Who*, and Olympic medals won between 1912 and 1936. Charles Snyder, "A Study in the Demographic Distribution of Cultural Achievement," *Scientific Monthly* 46 (March 1938): 265.

Nobel Prizes awarded between 1901 and 1937. He recorded the distribution of the 19,000 biographical citations in the *International Who's Who* for 1937. He tabulated both the distribution of the number of record-holders and the distribution of the top six finishers in all events at the Olympic Games contested between 1912 and 1936. He compared the scores in each category to a statistically-derived ideal score based on population and the total prizes available. Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Holland, Austria and Estonia topped Snyder's cultural achievement roster. The United States and Canada (which Snyder counted as a single cultural unit for the purposes of his study) ranked fifteenth. At the bottom of the list lay Spain, the Soviet Union, and India.¹³⁰

Snyder addressed skeptics who might argue that since the Nobel Prize Committee consisted of Scandinavians and the publishers of the *International Who's Who* were British, each group would necessarily be biased in favor of its own citizens. He asserted instead that "to offset these misgivings it is only fair to state that, since no specific evidence exists to support them, we must believe that everything has been done to insure a selection of only competent, upright and fearless judges and that those selected have performed their duties to the best of their abilities." That the Olympic results revealed national skill and cultural achievement in an impartial fashion went without saying. Such were the pervasiveness and power of the mystique of sport as an objective scientific measuring device.¹³¹

Snyder prefaced his conclusions with a caveat. He admitted that he was using a Western “yardstick” to measure the concept of culture. With that admission out of the way he announced that the “center of occidental cultural achievements” lay in western and northern Europe. In addition, Snyder claimed that a comparison of “artistic” and “intellectual” accomplishments with “athletic achievements” demonstrated “statistical confirmation” for the “belief that peoples who excel in the one excel also in the other fields of achievement.” He found, of course, that the smaller and more racially homogenous rather than the larger and more racially heterogenous nations topped the list of cultural achievers.¹³²

He acknowledged that a complete explanation of the supremacy of smaller states would only emerge from more thorough scientific studies. “But having raised the query,” he felt obliged to offer a “brief prolegomenon” of the outcome such research might produce. “At the outset one may say without fear of contradiction that those peoples who satisfy so well our measures of cultural achievement will be found to be made up of less divergent varieties of *homo sapiens* than are those of the less successful groups,” he posited. “The prospective corollary to this proposition doubtless also will be found to hold; namely, that amongst a people where the individuals diverge too greatly in blood and breeding there will be extreme diversity in temperament and conflict of ideals, less balance between dreaming and doing, between debate and decision, more time lost in planning and performing.”¹³³

Heterogenous nations, hypothesized Snyder, failed to develop public interests in the common good regardless of the intelligence level of the nation. They could not develop, much less carry out, a national mission. What then should Americans, or any Western people do, “who wish to prolong their cultural ideals and national existence?” queried Snyder. “In view of all the foregoing it seems that among the first things to do is to abandon the prevalent timidity and reluctance toward an open discussion of race problems, and of eugenics which aims not only at the eradication of hereditary (as well as endemic) diseases and low-grade mentalities, but includes also a thorough consideration of hereditary mental attitudes and behavior patterns.” Snyder insisted that sexual problems had “vastly improved since they have been brought out into the open; our race and eugenics problems will likewise benefit by bringing them out into the light.”¹³⁴

Snyder thought that the solution should proceed along political as well as educational paths. “Since the majority of our people are of northwestern European origins, it is quite reasonable that the control of affairs should finally rest in the hands of leaders selected from such stocks,” he asserted. Snyder warned that if the races that should lead allowed power to fall into the hands of “inferior” groups they had only themselves to blame. Indeed, “there is some indication that these minorities are already on the way toward the control of affairs,” he worried. Snyder urged “our somnolent majority” to awaken before it was too late and “take measures for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of our population.” He argued for limiting immigration “exclusively to selected stock” from Nordic nations, legislating more stringently against interracial marriages, promoting “enlightened” sterilization laws, and adopting a system of political representation that favored “individuals and groups who innately sympathize with and give most intelligent support to the ideals of our western culture.” Snyder even allowed that if

the proper measures were undertaken quickly, “perhaps then all this still may be accomplished in peaceful ways and within the frame of a democracy. Perhaps then even America will know finally what she wants and where she is going.”¹³⁵

Americans tend to forget too easily that science in their nation frequently served the interests of racism. Certainly Snyder was not alone in championing Nordic supremacy in United States scientific circles. His proposals for an American set of race statutes and policies that in spirit closely resembled Nazi laws was not exactly an aberrant philosophy in the United States. The idea of racial purification through eugenics policies enjoyed significant expert support and mass popularity in the 1930s. In fact, the United States had more eugenics legislation on the books during that decade than did the Third Reich. Many scientists advocated race-based eugenics programs, although many other scientists were working to topple racist constructs and biological theories of intelligence during the 1930s. The questions posed by the science of race were still very much open in the intellectual world that existed before the Second World War.¹³⁶

While the ideas of Charles Snyder received prominent play in the pages of one of the United States most important mass-circulation journals of scientific ideas, *Scientific Monthly*, it did not stir up a great deal of controversy. Other scientific racists did not seem to want to try to use Snyder’s logic to debunk the triumphs of African-American Olympic stars. Prominent civil rights leaders such as Oswald Garrison Villard, the editor of *The Nation* and a cofounder of the N.A.A.C.P. and the N.A.A.C.P.’s *The Crisis*, ignored Snyder’s arguments and concentrated on exposing the hypocrisy of a nation that both celebrated and segregated the lives of Jesse Owens and other African-American Olympians.¹³⁷

The silence that greeted Snyder can be accounted for by the fact that he was arguing for the older paradigm of athletic racial science. Snyder seems to be the last adherent of the school that believed that people of European descent were superior in every human category—physical as well as intellectual. In a very short time period athletic racial science had moved in a new direction. General acknowledgment that people of African descent had anatomical advantages that accounted for their athletic feats characterized the new paradigm. Ideas of black superiority ended at the body, however, and the new theories implied a disconnection between athletic and other abilities. Scientific racists were still free to rank Europeans above other racial groups in intelligence and every other “civilized” trait. Snyder was out-of-step with the new developments in profiling racial differences.

The Paradoxical Consequences of African-American Olympic Prowess, Racial Science, and American Shibboleths

Perhaps Snyder’s antiquarianism accounts for the strange reception of his ideas by John R. Tunis. Tunis, one of the more insightful critics who explored American sport in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s and an ardent opponent of segregation on American playing fields, mentioned Snyder’s work in a positive light. Tunis had railed against Nazi sport and condemned the 1936 Olympics as an ode to Hitlerian fascism and Aryan racism. He actively opposed the exclusion of African Americans and Jews from many realms of American sporting life. He embraced the idea of a multiethnic United States, declaring that “we are not today an Anglo-Saxon nation, but rather a mixture of every race on earth.” He cham-

pioned athletic egalitarianism. "We need to give everyone an equal chance to play; rich, poor, black, white, Jew, Gentile, Chinaman [an unfortunate word choice to more contemporary ears], those who are quick and perceptive as well as those who in sports are slow and inept." Tunis castigated the American athletic establishment for its racist treatment of Jesse Owens. He detested the decision by the Amateur Athletic Union to award the 1936 amateur athlete of the year honor to Glenn Morris, the European-American decathlete who won a gold medal in Berlin, rather than to Owens. "In other words, Owens was good enough to win the Olympics for us, but as a Negro not good enough to receive the obvious award he had earned," fumed Tunis. "When we need him to prevent German Aryan supremacy from asserting itself in sports in which we formerly triumphed, the Negro is an American," he continued. Tunis quoted one of his sportswriting colleagues, Paul Gallico, to drive the point home. "At other times, as Paul Gallico put it: 'He remains just plain nigger and we'd rather he weren't around because he represents a problem.'" Tunis insisted that Owens' failure to cash in on his fame and his relegation to an obscure sideshow act in athletic carnivals proved that racism corrupted even the supposedly pristine turf of American sport.¹³⁸

Yet, in a 1937 essay in *Atlantic Monthly*, Tunis remained blind to the scientific racism that generated Snyder's index of national athletic performance.¹³⁹ Tunis was enchanted by one part of Snyder's thesis. He concurred with Snyder that the common belief that the United States was the premier athletic nation in the world was "not wholly supported by the facts." Snyder's work appealed to Tunis because it supported Tunis' assertion that the United States had become "a nation of onlookers." In his fervor to prove that Americans were spectators rather than players and that the population-to-medal-production ratios in Snyder's essays were "scientific" confirmation of the fact, Tunis passed by Snyder's unbridled support for Nordic eugenic supremacy.¹⁴⁰

Tunis was not the only one to bypass Snyder's defense of the older version of scientific racism. Snyder's analyses of Olympic medal counts designed to discount the achievements of Owens and the other "black auxiliaries" and to prove that Nordics and Aryans were superior athletes did not have a significant impact on public views. The vision of Owens' feet as the greatest debunkers of Nazi racial theories proved far more popular in both the immediate aftermath of the 1936 Games and in the longer struggle against racist ideologies in American history. Many Americans preferred to believe that Olympic data confirmed that the United States was a "union of all races" rather than to indulge Snyder's theories about racial purity and northern European physical prowess.

In some ways, as *The Crisis* hoped, Owens' running, in conjunction with Joe Louis' boxing, and, in the next decade, Jackie Robinson's hitting, fielding, and base-stealing,¹⁴¹ began to alter the opinions of at least some portion of the millions who held "the solution of the race problem in their hands." Owens and the "black auxiliaries," and those athletes who followed in their footsteps, did indeed provide some lessons in "interracial education."¹⁴² In spite of Snyder's efforts the data produced by Owens and the "black auxiliaries" did not diminish the American faith that Olympic stadiums were crucial locations for social reconstruction and racial reconciliation. The idea of sport as the crucible for smelting an American "union of all races" flourished in the wake of the Berlin Olympics. Pundits imagined a stronger American democracy forged from athletic competition. "Public

opinion derives no small share of its faith in truth, justice and freedom from playing fields," asserted journalist and radio correspondent Raymond Gram Swing in the introduction to John Tunis' *Sport and Democracy*.¹⁴³ In the book Tunis labeled sport "a proving ground for democracy." Inspired by the example of Owens and other African-American Olympians, Tunis believed that the solution to America's "problem of racial discrimination" resided in sport. "The good teacher and the real coach make sure there is no such thing in his classes or on his teams," he insisted. "Actually this means the Jewish boy and the Negro boy have not only a chance to play, but a chance for leadership with every other player," wrote Tunis. "The rich, poor, able, inefficient, everyone has an opportunity to participate in the game."¹⁴⁴

Tunis' version of democratic sport seemed to fit W. Montague Cobb's science. It seemed like an opportune time for Cobb's ideas to bloom. Cobb asserted that athletic genius was spawned by the same qualities whether it resided under white skins or black skins. Hard work, tenacity, courage, discipline, and intelligence made great athletes. No peculiar combination of racial genes accounted for black, or white, athletic success. In Cobb's paradigm Owens was indistinguishable anatomically from many European Americans while his white teammate in the sprints, Frank Wykoff, shared physiological features with American citizens of African descent. Cobb defied the racial typologists to line up Owens and other Olympic champions and discover any unique racial characteristics that produced their medals. The results of Olympic races did not prove that one race was superior to another race but that the United States was—as Olympic mythology affirmed—"a union of all races."

This heroic vision of Owens served the United States in certain respects as C.L.R. James's vision of Frank Worrell, the first black captain of a West Indian cricket team, served the West Indies in the climactic scenes of *Beyond a Boundary*. James' Worrell was the symbol of birth of a new nation committed to racial equality.¹⁴⁵ Since the 1930s Owens has provided the United States with a symbol of the rebirth of a nation powerfully reanimated by a commitment to racial equality. Ironically, James's lifetime struggle to create a West Indian nation remains an unfulfilled dream. Owens has been consigned to a similar fate in American nation-making. He remains an icon in the unfinished reconstruction of an American republic committed to racial equality.

That reconstruction remains unfinished in part because of the role science played in constructing the racial categories that animate dialogues about national identity in Olympic forums. In spite of the symmetry between the ideology of American nationalism expressed in *Sport and Democracy* and similar works glorifying sport as one of the cornerstones of the modern American republic and Cobb's reading of the scientific data from Olympic performances, a different reading of race, nation, and sporting prowess has emerged in American history. The failure of Snyder's efforts to reanimate the older paradigm of Nordic and Aryan athletic supremacy did not mean the automatic triumph of Cobb's science. True, the data spun by Owens' feat consigned the older paradigm of European racial superiority in athletic endeavors to the scrapheap. But that same data failed to destroy the practice of constructing racial typologies in scientific speculations about human performance.¹⁴⁶ In the wake of the performances by Owens and the "black auxiliaries" the new scientific paradigm which assigned African-American Olympic victories to

genetic sources and natural anatomical advantages flourished in both the scientific community and in public opinion.¹⁴⁷ Cobb's alternative interpretation of the data remained in the shadows.

This result has had important consequences for both the social construction of race and the imagining of national community in the United States. The new version of athletic racial science did not categorically rule out the notion—as Snyder's scientific racism did—that the United States was a "union of all races." It did, however, substantially alter the meaning and nature of the perceived union. In this formulation races were assigned different roles in the union. America's "black auxiliaries" received the role of natural athletes who contributed to American civilization by placing their physical prowess in the national service. African Americans served the nation with their bodies.¹⁴⁸ This was a crucial distinction given the fact that the widely accepted corollary to the theory of black athletic superiority was the scholarly claim of a corresponding intellectual inferiority—one of the foundation stones of scientific racism. The new paradigm of athletic racial science disconnected mental and physical prowess and fit neatly with a long history of allegations that scientific tests of intelligence indicated black inferiority. It seemed to offer confirmation of the multitude of intelligence quotient tests that measured racial superiority and inferiority which had begun during World War I and burgeoned in the 1920s and 1930s—at the very same time as Owens and other African-American athletes offered new data about physical performance.

This new paradigm has proven to be remarkably popular and amazingly resilient. The fear of Cobb and others that a new American "shibboleth" in regards to race was under scientific construction was well-founded. This particular version of an American "union of all races" prescribed roles for various ethnic groups on the basis of attributes for which nature had supposedly fitted them.¹⁴⁹

The Strange History of Sport, Science, and the Conditioning of American Attitudes About Race

Sixteen years after Jesse Owens supposedly shattered racial mythology in Berlin, the manager of the Colonial Sugar Company refinery in Gramercy, Louisiana, George P. Meade, contributed an article to the *Scientific Monthly* on "The Negro in Track Athletics." Writing in the same well-regarded journal of the American Association of Advancement of Science in which Charles Snyder had published his indices of Nordic and Aryan athletic, intellectual, and cultural supremacy to counter Owens' triumphs, Meade returned to the debate. Meade, who beginning in 1916 enjoyed a long tenure as a contributor to the *Scientific Monthly* on topics ranging from sports to mud snakes to the youthful biographies of great scientists to "A Negro Scientist of Slavery Days,"¹⁵⁰ congratulated Owens and the "black auxiliaries" for showing Hitler the fallacy of Aryanism. He also applauded black American medalists at the 1952 Olympics for showing that "Communist ideas about the status of our colored citizens" were at a "sharp variance" with American realities. He did not offer African-American Olympic champions any accolades for showing the fallacy of Jim Crow.¹⁵¹

Meade provided *Scientific Monthly's* readers with a history of black track and field accomplishments, beginning as Montague Cobb had with the exploits of 1912 Olympian

Howard Drew. Meade insisted that it was still easy to see that the trends that marked the first half of the twentieth century, impressive performances by African-American sprinters and long jumpers, were continuing in spite of the fact that the Associated Press and the United Press services no longer distinguished the racial identities of Olympic athletes. "The question naturally arises as to why such a small segment of our population has provided such a large proportion of extremely high-class performers," noted Meade.¹⁵²

Meade cautiously discounted scientific claims of a genetically determined black athletic superiority. "Possibly the explanation is sociologic rather than ethnologic," he speculated. To support his "sociologic" interpretation of the data, Meade offered several pieces of evidence. He observed that track and field had been one of the first sports in which blacks were allowed to compete against whites. That fact, he postulated, attracted African Americans to the cinder paths and jumping pits. Noting that certain schools dominated particular events in intercollegiate track and field such as Yale in pole-vaulting and Cornell in distance running, Meade offered "example and fashion" as an alternative to genetic explanations. If "example and fashion" made Yale and Cornell powers in certain events, Meade speculated, then the same forces would also influence how ethnic groups participated in sports. The historic tradition of black sprinters and long jumpers worked to funnel talented African-American athletes into those disciplines. He also noted that "example and fashion" could change quickly, and that African-American domination of certain events might become like earlier Irish American domination, a "passing phase."¹⁵³

Meade also noticed that African-American track and field stars frequently competed for many more years than their white counterparts. It was not unusual for black athletes to extend their careers into their thirties whereas white athletes generally retired at much earlier ages. "This persistence may possibly be due to lack of other opportunities for self-expression," Meade theorized. Racial discrimination closed off alternative paths and pushed African-American athletes into intense struggles to remain at the top of world-class competition speculated the manager of a Louisiana sugar refinery.¹⁵⁴

Meade closed his essay with an effort to justify his circumspect explanations for the data. "Whatever the reason or reasons may be, the showing of Negro athletes in these specialized techniques is noteworthy, and the purpose of this compilation is to preserve the data in a form for future reference," Meade concluded.¹⁵⁵ How to interpret this data remained the central question. It was a question that Meade, who as early as 1916 had proclaimed that athletic performance should be treated as scientific data,¹⁵⁶ mostly avoided in his 1952 essay. More than a half-century of speculation about race and athletic ability had not settled the question in either scientific or popular culture. Carleton Coon, the University of Pennsylvania physical anthropologist whose theories about the origins of race would serve as the bedrock for the erection of new varieties of scientific racism in the second half of the twentieth century,¹⁵⁷ read Meade's essay with interest. Coon was intrigued by the host of statistical evidence Meade provided to indicate that blacks were far superior to whites in Olympic athletics. Coon was not as complimentary about Meade's assessment of the reason for African-American Olympic prowess. "Author welshe[s] on explanation," Coon asserted in his reading notes, "says it can't be bone structure, it must be sociological."¹⁵⁸ Coon, who from the 1950s forward would be a central figure in the promotion of theories about black athletic genes and the scientific validity of drawing firm

racial distinctions in human populations,¹⁵⁹ discounted any “sociologic” explanation of the data. Coon determined that different bone structure, or an anatomy shaped for “better thermal equilibrium,” must be the theory that accounted for the data.¹⁶⁰

Sadly, another half-century of speculation has not led where W. Montague Cobb hoped. Scientists and spectators still look to Olympic arenas for data that reveals distinct racial types. Many Americans who line up their Olympic champions for inspection still suspect that race has everything to do with the athletes’ abilities. So thoroughly have scientific and public sentiment been “conditioned by American attitudes”¹⁶¹—to borrow Cobb’s discerning phrase—that it often seems difficult to conceive of other explanations. The history of American beliefs about race reveal this as a dangerous, if all too familiar, lack of imagination.

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1. John Hoberman, *Darwin’s Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 166-168; Lesley M. Rankin-Hill and Michael L. Blakey, “W. Montague Cobb (1904-1990): Physical Anthropologist, Anatomist, and Activist,” *American Anthropologist* 96 (March 1994): 74-96.
 2. W. Montague Cobb, “Race and Runners,” *Journal of Health and Physical Education* 7 (January 1936): 3-7, 52-56.
 3. Cromwell argued that these “primitive” evolutionary traits only helped black athletes in purely physical events such as sprints and jumps. In events such as middle-distance running, which Cromwell asserted required more mental than physical skills, the British “race” dominated. Dean Cromwell and Al Wesson, *Championship Techniques in Track and Field* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1941), 5-6, 9-10.
 4. David K. Wiggins, “‘Great Speed But Little Stamina’: The Historical Debate Over Black Athletic Superiority,” *Journal of Sport History* 16 (Summer 1989): 158-185, provides a good introduction to the issues. See also David K. Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997). Patrick B. Miller, “The Anatomy of Scientific Racism: Racist Responses to Black Athletic Achievement,” *Journal of Sport History* 25 (Spring 1998): 119-151, offers an excellent intellectual history of the subject. In *Darwin’s Athletes* John Hoberman offers a sweeping history of how for much of the last two centuries scientific and popular estimates of athletic ability have shaped attitudes about race in ways that confirm notions of white superiority in “civilized” endeavors. Hoberman’s interpretations have sparked controversy. For example, see the recent exchange between Hoberman and Jeffrey Sammons in the *Journal of Sport History* Jeffrey T. Sammons, “A Proportional and Measured Response to the Provocation That Is *Darwin’s Athletes*,” *Journal of Sport History* 24 (Fall 1997): 378-388; and John Hoberman, “How Not to Misread *Darwin’s Athletes*: A Response to Jeffrey Sammons,” *Journal of Sport History* 24 (Fall 1997): 389-396.
 5. Cobb, “Race and Runners,” 5. See also W. Montague Cobb, “Does Science Favor Negro Athletes?” *Negro Digest* 5 (May 1947): 74-77. Hoberman contends that Cobbs life-long interest in athletics, race, and human anatomy actually produced a much more complex and conflicted view of the connections between sporting prowess and genetic endowment. While in certain places Cobb argued that culture rather than biology created African-American athletic stars, in other places Cobb argued for a “special ‘hardihood’” produced in part by the “brutal but ultimately eugenic process of selection” created by slavery Hoberman, *Darwin’s Athletes*, 166-168.
 6. The current historiography on race and sport dates the shift from theories of white physical supremacy to black physical supremacy to the first two decades of the twentieth century when efforts were made to explain the prowess of cyclist Marshall “Major” Taylor, boxer Jack Johnson, and other prominent athletes of African heritage. See Miller, “The Anatomy of Scientific Racism”; Wiggins, “‘Great Speed But Little Stamina’”; Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White*

Hopes (New York: Free Press, 1983); and Andrew Ritchie, *Marshall "Major" Taylor: The Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Racer* (San Francisco: Bicycle Books, 1998). While there certainly were efforts to explain, or explain away, the prowess of Taylor, Johnson, and other African-American athletic champions as individual aberrations, the real shift in treating people of African descent as an athletically superior *group* in scientific and popular literature begins in the 1930s.

7. Hoberman, *Darwin's Athletes*, 99-107.
8. These puzzles would eventually produce the kind of paradigm shift in scientific theories about race and physical supremacy that fits Thomas Kuhn's theory about the nature of change in science. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
9. The social construction of race has garnered much scholarly attention in recent decades. The work that presages later histories of the social construction of race in American history is Winthrop Jordan's *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1968). Another important early work is George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). An informative overview of the subject is Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, new ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Studies of the social construction of race in American history have concentrated mainly on colonial and antebellum patterns of slavery, on literature and mass culture, and on the labor, class, and politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For studies of the social construction of race in relation to slavery see Roger Abrahams, *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South* (New York: Pantheon, 1992); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Philip D. Morgan, *Before Cotton and Other Than Sugar: How Tobacco and Rice Shaped the World of Eighteenth-Century Slaves in British North America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Owhondro Institute for Early American History and Culture, 1998); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1998); and Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For the social construction of race in literature and mass culture see Michael Rogin, "Making America Home: Racial Masquerade and Ethnic Assimilation in the Transition to Talking Pictures," *Journal of American History* 79 (December 1992): 1050-1077; Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Interrogating 'Whiteness,' Complicating 'Blackness': Remapping American Culture," *American Quarterly* 47 (September 1995): 428-466; Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1993); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); and Gerald Early, ed., *Lure and Loathing: Essays on Race, Identity, and the Ambivalence of Assimilation* (New York: Penguin, 1973). For studies of labor, class, politics, and the social construction of race see Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Eric Arnesen, *Waterfont Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Wayne Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Joe William Trotter, *Coal, Class and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-1932* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Robin G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 75-113; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1999); and Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall*

of the *White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Verso, 1990).

Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness* and Saxton's *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* are harbingers of a growing body of work on the construction of whiteness. See Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1998); and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

The literature on the social construction of race through sport is more limited. See Gerald Early, *The Culture of Bruising: Essays on Prizefighting, Literature, and Modern American Culture* (Hopewell, N.J.: Ecco Press, 1994); Gerald Early, ed., *Body Language: Writers on Sport* (St. Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 1998); Jeffrey T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Michael Eric Dyson, "Be Like Mikel: Michael Jordan and the Pedagogy of Desire," in *Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 64-74; and Michael Eric Dyson, "Crossing Over Jordan," in *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 56-59.

10. In certain respects Owens ran, as other Americans of African descent wrote, in order to craft what Paulin Houtondji has labeled as a "certificate of humanity" for himself and his race redeemable with white audiences. Houtondji cited in Henry Louis Gates, ed., *Race, "Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 12.
11. John Higham has recently argued that "ethnic tensions are best understood within a context of nation-building." Higham, in a rumination on the continuing importance of his epic *Strangers in the Land*, insists that an understanding of racial and ethnic conflicts requires that historians also pay attention to the ideas surrounding "[n]ational consciousness—that is, an awareness of an attachment to an American identity." John Higham, "Instead of a Sequel, Or How I Lost My Subject," *Reviews in American History* 28 (June 2000): 333-334.
12. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).
13. As Allen Guttman has pointed out, the use of sport to construct national identities characterized by racial harmony is not unique to the United States. It flourishes in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. "If nations are what Benedict Anderson's influential theory claims them to be, imagined communities, then modern sports are an important and popularly accessible aid to this politically indispensable form of imagining," Guttman contends. Allen Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 183.
14. In fact more than six decades later Owens continues to symbolize those two processes, as a recent cover of *US. News & World Report* entitled "Olympic Legends" makes clear. The cover pictures Owens sprinting to glory at the 1936 Olympic Games with a subtitle proposing a story explaining "How some athletes become mythic figures." In the accompanying cover story, Owens appears as an icon of both national self-definition and American racial distinctions. Bryan Duffy, "Going for the Gold," *U.S. News & World Report*, 4 September 2000, cover and 48-53.
15. According to British geographer John Bale, "Sport is, after war, probably the principle means of collective identification in modern life." John Bale, "Sport and National Identity: A Geographical View," *British Journal of Sports History* 3 (May 1986): 18. Excellent histories of sport and national identity outside of the United States are Douglas Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity Since 1884* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999); John Nauright, *Sport, Culture, and Identities in South Africa* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997); Andrew Morris, "I Can Compete! China in the Olympic Games," *Journal of Sport History* 26 (Fall 1999): 545-566; and Cesar Torres, "Mass Sport Through Education or Elite Olympic Sport? Jose Benjamin Zubiaur's

- Dilemma and Argentina's Olympic Sports Legacy," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 7 (1998): 61-88.
16. James scolds social historians for treating sport as either ephemera or some sort of opiate of the masses. "If this is not social history what is?" James wonders. Sport, James, lectures, "finds no place in the history of the people because the historians do not begin from what people seem to want but from what they think the people ought to want." C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963; Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), xxi (1ST AND 2ND QUOTATIONS), 64 (3RD QUOTATION), 152 (4TH QUOTATION), 184-185.
 17. Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team: Sport, Culture, and the Olympic Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).
 18. George P. Meade, "An Analytical Study of Athletic Records," *Scientific Monthly* 2 (June 1916): 596. *Science* was the other official journal for the American Association of the Advancement of Science.
 19. J.R. Hildebrand, "The Geography of Games: How the Sports of Nations Form a Gazetteer of the Habits and Histories of Their Peoples," *National Geographic Magazine* 36 (August 1919): 89.
 20. This claim to a transnational identity for the Olympic Games that transcends the national character of most sporting events belies the Euro-American essence of the Olympic movement. Guttman, *Games and Empires*, 120-138.
 21. Dyreson, *Making the American Team*.
 22. As William Montague Cobb noted, Americans argued about the relative prowess of African Americans such as Paul Robeson in football, Satchel Paige in baseball, and Joe Louis in boxing, but many realized the "subjective" nature of those comparisons. Only track and field seemed to provide an "objective" laboratory for making racial comparisons. Cobb, "Does Science Favor Negro Athletes?" 74.
 23. In fact Hildebrand's *National Geographic* essay on "The Geography of Games" noted that one of the great civilizing events in the post-World War I world was the spread of Western sports to the "black, yellow, and tan" peoples of the world. Hildebrand, "The Geography of Games," 89.
 24. Cobb, "Race and Runners," 3.
 25. See Gossett, *Race*; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982); Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Allen Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Cost of the New Scientific Racism* (New York: Knopf, 1976); Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972); Jonathan Marks, *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995); William H. Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
 26. Embedded in endeavors to interpret the performances of Jesse Owens and many other Olympians were fundamental assumptions about race and the human species. Defining race has consumed American cultures since the European conquest of the "New World." Historically, race has had multiple and imprecise definitions. In nineteenth-century Euro-American civilization race divided people by nationality, linguistic affinity, religion, or cultural practice as well as separating groups by skin color. Western literature was filled with references to an English race, a Scottish race, a German race, a Jewish race, a Slavic race, an Islamic race, a Southern race and a host of other races. Since at least the first few decades of the twentieth century the concept of race has been linked mainly to skin color. Gossett, *Race*; Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*; Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Rarely do modern commentators invoke the older idea of an "American race." They use other terminology to refer to essence of nationhood. For instance, in 1955 the French student of American civilization, Andre Siegfried, determined that while there was

- no "American race" no one "could deny the existence of an American people." Andre Siegfried, *America at Mid-Century*, trans. Margaret Ledesert (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), 45.
27. Jimmy "the Greek" Snyder lost a lucrative job as a Columbia Broadcasting System sports commentator for his pseudo-scientific speculations that African Americans had "been bred" by slave holders in ways that made them genetically superior athletes. "Scorecard—An Oddsmaker's Odd Views," *Sports Illustrated*, 25 January 1988, p. 7. Sir Roger Bannister, the English runner who in 1954 became the first person to run a mile in less than four minutes, stirred controversy in 1995 by entering the scientific debate over the idea of racial superiority in athletic performance. Bannister, as a respected neurologist, supposedly possessed greater scientific acumen than Snyder. Yet Bannister offered the same basic view of "genetic" racial superiority as "Jimmy the Greek." Tim Radford, "Bannister's Bombshell," *World Press Review* 42 (December 1995): 20; Jack McCallum and Kostya Kennedy, "A Different Race for Sir Roger," *Sports Illustrated*, 25 September 1995, p. 15. An issue of *Scientific American* published in September 2000 during the Olympics in Sydney featured African-American sprinter Brian Lewis on the cover with the title "Muscles & Genes: Are Star Athletes Born, Not Made?" Although the story accompanying the cover did not speculate on the racial distribution of athletic genes, the authors did make it clear that contemporary science revealed that genetics had an enormous role in shaping elite athletic performance. Jesper L. Andersen, Peter Schjerling, and Bengt Saltin, "Muscle, Genes, and Athletic Performance," *Scientific American* 283 (September 2000): 48-55.
 28. "Race Questions at the Olympics," *Independent*, 25 July 1912, pp. 214-215.
 29. Mark Dyreson, "Playing for a National Identity: Sport, Ethnicity and American Political Culture," *Proteus* 11 (Fall 1994): 39-43; Mark Dyreson, "America's Athletic Missionaries': Political Performance, Olympic Spectacle and the Quest for an American National Culture, 1896-1912," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 1 (1992): 70-91; Mark Dyreson, "Melting Pot Victories: Racial Ideas and the Olympic Games in American Culture During the Progressive Era," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6 (May 1989): 49-61.
 30. For broad overviews of the patterns of racial discrimination in American sport see Elliott Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); and Benjamin Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1996). See also Allen Guttmann, "Black Athletes" in *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of Modern Sport* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 119-138, which explores the contradictions between nationalism and racism fostered by American sporting practices.

For insightful commentary on the complexities of race and athletic life in the United States see, in particular, Roberts, *Papa Jack*; Ritchie, *Marshall "Major" Taylor*; Sammons, *Beyond the Ring*; William J. Baker, *Jesse Owens; An American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

For other important perspectives see Arthur Ashe, *A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African American Athlete, 1619-1918* (New York: Warner, 1988); Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: Free Press, 1969); and Jack Olson, *The Black Athlete: A Shameful Story* (New York: Time-Life, 1968).
 31. Claims of American victory were based on track and field results rather than an overall medal count. The United States certainly dominated the 1904 Olympics in St. Louis, but no other nation bothered to send a competitive team to the St. Louis Games. Employing creative arithmetic, the United States could perhaps claim a slim victory at Stockholm in 1912. American athletes did not win a majority of the Olympic contests at the Athens, Paris or London Olympics. Dyreson, *Making the American Team*.
 32. For an insightful history relating scientific racism directly to athletics see Miller, "The Anatomy of Scientific Racism" and Wiggins, "Great Speed But Little Stamina." For broader histories of the subject see George Cotkin, "Anthropology, Progress and Racism," in *Reluctant Modernism: American*

- Thought and Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Twayne, 1992), 51-73; John S. Hailer, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Heredity-Environment Controversy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1991).
33. The concept of "high brow" racism was deftly explored in Paul A. Carter, *The Twenties in America* (New York: Crowell, 1968), 88-95.
 34. On the history of world's fairs as exhibitions of racialist thinking see Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
 35. Mark Dyreson, "The Playing Fields of Progress: American Athletic Nationalism and the St. Louis Olympics of 1904," *Gateway Heritage* 14 (Fall 1993): 4-23; Lew Carlson, "Giant Patagonians and Hairy Ainu: Anthropology Days at the 1904 St. Louis Olympics," *Journal of American Culture* 12 (Fall 1989): 19-26.
 36. Cromwell and Wesson, *Championship Techniques in Track and Field*, 5-6.
 37. Cromwell's widely shared belief that people of African descent are natural athletes while people of European descent win athletic laurels through mental toughness and determination remains deeply embedded in American culture. After a bitter loss by the Detroit Pistons to the Boston Celtics in the 1987 National Basketball Association playoffs, two African-American members of the Pistons claimed that Celtic star Larry Bird was overrated because he was white. They implied that the media portrayed Bird as a player who had to "work" and to use his "mind" in order to become a professional basketball player while black players were considered "natural athletes" who relied on pure physical ability. Such a view stereotyped African Americans as both lazy and unintelligent. Those attitudes, contended Dennis Rodman and Isaiah Thomas, constituted a powerful form of racism in American culture. Frank Deford, "A Player for the Ages," *Sports Illustrated*, 21 March 1988, pp. 46-65; Bruce Newman, "Black, White—and Gray," *Sports Illustrated*, 22 May 1988, pp. 62-69. In "The Black Athlete Revisited," a 1991 update of its seminal 1968 expose on racism in American sport, "The Black Athlete," *Sports Illustrated* provided evidence that the images of black athletes as "naturals" and white athletes as diligent, self-made stars who used their "minds" were indeed still a part of American sporting culture. "The Black Athlete Revisited," *Sports Illustrated*, 5 August 1991, pp. 38-77; 12 August 1991, pp. 26-73; 19 August 1991, pp. 40-51.
 38. "A Novel Athletic Contest," *World's Fair Bulletin* 5 (September 1904): 50.
 39. On the role of the "interim" Games in resuscitating the Olympic movement see Dyreson, *Making the American Team*, 126-134.
 40. Charles Edward Woodruff, 1860-1915, earned a physician's degree from Jefferson Medical College in Pennsylvania in 1886. He served for many years as a surgeon in the U.S. Army, including several tours of duty in the Philippines during the American occupation and pacification of the islands. After retiring from the military in 1913 he became the associate editor of *American Medicine*. "Charles Edward Woodruff," in Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 10 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 10: 496-497.
 41. Charles E. Woodruff, "The Failure of Americans as Athletes," *North American Review* 186 (October 1907): 200-204; Charles E. Woodruff, "Why the Native American Does So Badly at the Olympic Games," *Current Literature* 53 (August 1912): 182-184.
 42. Woodruff, "The Failure of Americans," 200-201; Woodruff, "Why the Native American," 182-183.
 43. Woodruff, "Why the Native American," 182-184; Woodruff, "The Failure of Americans," 200-204.
 44. Light, skin color and race fascinated Woodruff. He wrote a series of "scientific" essays exploring those concepts. Charles E. Woodruff, "Does Excessive Light Limit Tropical Plankton?" *Science* 31 (22 April 1910): 618-620; Charles E. Woodruff, "The Relation of Pigmentation to Temperature in Deep-Sea Animals," *Science* 35 (12 April 1912): 591-593; Charles E. Woodruff, "Unrecognized Enemy of Panama Canal-Excessive Sunlight," *Harper's Weekly*, 13 April 1907, p. 537. He also wrote a book entitled *The Effects of Tropical Light on White Men* (New York: Rebman, 1905).

45. Woodruff, "Why the Native American," 183-184; Woodruff, "The Failure of Americans," 201-204.
46. Woodruff, "The Failure of Americans," 201-204; Woodruff, "Why the Native American," 183.
47. Woodruff "The Failure of Americans," 202.
48. The charts and graphs drawing racial conclusions from Olympic performances based on per-capita medal-production represented a very simplistic science. In fact, it was simple-minded pseudo-science. The pseudo-science of Olympic athletic performance was founded on two concepts that science could not isolate as purely physical phenomena—race and athletic performance. Race was not a measurable empirical category. Athletic performance, from many perspectives, also contains many important elements that defy empirical measurement. The philosopher of science Karl Popper demanded that scientific theories had to be not only testable and falsifiable but grounded in measurable empirical categories in order to "demarcate" them from non-scientific theories. He expelled Freudian psychology from the realm of science on several grounds—including the problem that such concepts as id, ego and super-ego were not empirically identifiable objects. Sir Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1962). Curiously, although they took some pains to try avoid that trap, Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein have fallen into similar misconceptions about the empirical validity of what are more accurately the cultural constructs of "race" and "intelligence" in their controversial *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1934).
49. Confusing social data, the number of Olympic medals won, or the percentages of African Americans in the National Basketball Association or National Football League or other athletic organizations with genetic data remains an all too common problem in studies of race and sport as Jon Entine's *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We Are Afraid To Talk About It* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000) demonstrates by repeating this common fallacy.
50. Woodruff, "The Failure of Americans," 204.
51. Woodruff, "The Failure of Americans," 201-204; Woodruff, "Why the Native American," 183-184. Woodruff's Olympic arguments buttressed the Malthusian forecasting he had engaged in several years earlier. Charles E. Woodruff, "Population of the United States During the Next Ten Centuries," *Popular Science* 58 (April 1901): 656-657.
52. Ironically, at about the same time Woodruff was touting the superiority of the "blonde types," Edwin B. Henderson, a pioneering African-American physical educator, hypothesized that slavery had created a natural reservoir of athletic ability in African Americans. Henderson thought that African-American athletes manifested genetic traits created by the rigors of slavery that made them "naturally" superior to European Americans. He called on black leaders to nurture "the native muscular development and vitality of the Negro of the South" in order to assault European-American conceptions of racial superiority. His assertion that African Americans had "natural" athletic advantages would later be used by white commentators to re-enforce racial stereotypes. Edwin B. Henderson, "The Colored College Athlete," *The Crisis* 2 (July 1911): 115-119. See also David Wiggins, "Edwin Bancroft Henderson, African American Athletes, and the Writing of Sport History," in *Glory Bound*, 221-240. Recently, historian David Wiggins has offered a more complex and compelling reading of Henderson's (and W. Montague Cobb's) fascination with the idea that the brutal forces of natural selection operating on the "Middle Passage" and on American slave plantations sowed the genetic seeds for a group of superior black athletes. Wiggins notes that Henderson's claims are paradoxical since he was a committed advocate of racial equality and assimilation. Throughout his long career Henderson combated theories of European genetic and cultural supremacy. His commitment to integration and racial reconciliation reveals that he did not simply want to replace white supremacy with black supremacy. Wiggins reveals that in making an evolutionary argument about the source of black athletic aptitude Henderson was not claiming African genetic superiority but arguing that African Americans had an enormous capacity for assimilation to new environment—as the history of slavery testified: "Henderson's assertion that 'there is just a likelihood that some very vital elements persist in the histological tissues of the glands or muscles of Negro athletes,' was not an argument that these athletes were innately more gifted physically than their white counterparts but acknowledgment of the level of advancement of blacks who had suffered at the

- hands of a cruel and unforgiving white America" (p. 103). In this new light, the use of Henderson's evolutionary theories to explain away black athletic prowess as merely the genetic result of slavery becomes even more pernicious. David Wiggins, "Edwin Bancroft Henderson: Physical Educator, Civil Rights Activist, and Chronicler of African American Athletes," *Research Quarterly, for Exercise and Sport* (June 1999): 91-112.
53. It was not a solitary dissent. Baroness Rose Posse, "How Physical Training Affects the Welfare of the Nation," *American Physical Education Review* 15 (October 1910): 513-525.
 54. "American and British Physical Characteristics as Shown in the Oxford-Princeton Meet," *Literary Digest*, 21 August 1920, pp. 106-108. The *Digest* argued that the 1920 Olympics would provide an even more "striking" illustration of racial differences.
 55. C. Meriwether, "Review of the *Effects of Tropical Light on White Men*," *National Geographic* 17 (January 1906): 47-48.
 56. "Woodruff," in Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 479.
 57. Charles Edward Woodruff, *The Expansion of Races* (New York: Rebman, 1909).
 58. Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17.
 59. Carter, *The Twenties*, 88-89.
 60. Guillermo Hoxmark, "The International Olympic Games as an Index to the Influence of Climate on Human Energy," *Ecology* 6 (July 1925): 199-202.
 61. *Ibid.*
 62. Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Harold Eugene Davis, *Latin American Thought: A Historical Introduction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972); Martin Stabb, *In Quest of Identity: Patterns in the Spanish American Essay of Idea, 1890-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967).
 63. Ellsworth Huntington, *Civilization and Climate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915); Ellsworth Huntington, *The Character of Races* (New York: Scribner's, 1924).
 64. See his chapters on "Health and National Character" and "Human Activity and Temperature" in Ellsworth Huntington, *Mainsprings of Civilization* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1945), 250-275.
 65. For brief histories of the role of Huntington in American scientific racism see Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research*; and Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society*.
 66. Hoxmark, "The International Olympic Games as an Index," 202.
 67. "'Conquering North' Threatens to Conquer Olympics," *Literary Digest*, 19 April 1924, pp. 66-70; T. Von Ziekursch, "Will the 'Conquering North' Win the Olympics?," *Strength* 9 (1924): 54-57.
 68. *Ibid.*
 69. The Boston *Herald* paid homage to the "liberal sprinkling of every race which excels in sports, the tightly nerved Latins, the running English and Scotch, the jumping Irish, the swimming Hawaiians, the Germans, Swedes and Norwegians, all with their own strong characteristics, and the surprisingly good Finns," that comprised the American team. "Why America Wins Olympics," *Literary Digest*, 26 July 1924, pp. 10-11.
 70. "Our Secret Discovered," *The Living Age*, 2 August 1924, pp. 199-200. In a series of three articles published two years before the Games of the Eighth Olympiad in 1922, Elmer Mitchell made a similar claim that American social environments melded European ethnic groups, and even small numbers of other "races" such as the "Negro," the "Jew," the "Indian," and the "Oriental," into a world-beating Olympic team that would clean up in Paris. Mitchell defined race as both a combination of biological heredity and culture and history. He was convinced that athletic achievement correlated directly with the highest levels of civilized achievement. Echoing the older melting pot theorists of the pre-World War I era, he was also certain that environment ultimately trumped

heredity in shaping the athletic aptitude of various races. Elmer Mitchell, "Racial Traits in Athletics," *American Physical Education Review* 27 (March 1922): 93-99; (April 1922): 147-152; (May 1922): 197-206.

71. Americans could read athletic scientific racism from European as well as American sources. One European observer of the 1924 Olympics concurred with Hoxmark that race, modified by climate, determined athletic performance. "At these games the profound difference between the white races—from the physiological point of view—will strike the eye once more," predicted Dr. Maurice Boiegy. "Under the influence of different climates, different historic and different economic conditions, each people has developed differences in nerve and muscle, which have eventually become hereditary and which are emphasizing themselves more and more in each generation so as to impress special characters on their typical forms of physical exertion." Dr. Maurice Boiegy, "The Olympic Games To-Day and Yesterday," *The Living Age*, 17 May 1924, p. 952.
72. "Who Really Won the Olympic Games?" *Current Opinion* 77 (September 1924): 340-341.
73. "America at Amsterdam," *The World's Work* 56 (October 1928): 584.
74. "Finland, which contains about two and a half million less inhabitants than the city of New York, has won more points in the Paris Olympic track and field athletic contests than any other nation than the United States," wrote Philip Coan in *Outlook*. Philip Coan, "Finnish Athletic Success," *Outlook*, 23 July 1924, p. 461. The *Literary Digest* marveled that "man for man, Finland, with a population that could be settled in half of New York City, 'beat us holler.'" "Why the Finns are Champions Athletes," *Literary Digest*, 2 August 1924, p. 39.
75. A *New York Times* editorial wondered, "What is the solution of the riddle unless it be found in the tenacity, phlegm, fortitude, 'perseverance allied to a certain obstinacy' and indomitable spirit of the Finn?" "The Yankee and the Finn," *New York Times*, 15 July 1924, p. 8.

American explanations of Finnish Olympic prowess centered on the racial and ecological factors that made the Finns superior athletes. Experts described Finnish runners as paragons of intellectual as well as physical virtues. Will power and determination were accorded as much influence as physiology. Harsh winters and rugged soil allowed only the fit to survive. The American sports-writer Grantland Rice noted that Finland was not an industrial power and thus was still in close contact with nature. Rice observed that "there is a certain sturdiness in this little nation's sons which the overcivilized may well envy." Rice, "Why America Wins Olympics," 11. Other explanations linked Finnish success to American success. The Finns and Americans were both "freedom fighters" who battled for liberty against tyrannical regimes—the United States' old fight against Great Britain and Finland's much longer struggles against Sweden, Germany, and Russia and the Soviet Union. "The Giant and the Pygmy," *Outlook*, 16 July 1924, p. 417. Philip Coan agreed that the fight for liberty inspired Finnish athletic supremacy. "That idea was preached by the partisans of Finnish liberties," crowed Coan. "The thousands of hard-working, poor men who set to work in the seemingly forlorn hope of outdoing the world's best runners, discus throwers, and jumpers worked for their country." Finland's victories had been attributed to diet and secret training processes, but Coan insisted that "it is an outgrowth of a small and earnest people's resolution to be great and of that people's gift for uniting to hold to one big idea with a bulldog grip and work long and hard for what it wants." Coan, "Finnish Athletic Success," 461-464.

Some observers even linked American and Finnish experiments with prohibition to the two nations' Olympic dominance. Two of the leading sportswriters in the United States waged a battle over the impact of prohibition on sporting performances. Grantland Rice spoke for the "drys." W.O. McGeehan took the "wet" position. Grantland Rice, "The Sportlight," *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 July 1924, p. 12; W.O. McGeehan, "Down the Line," *New York Herald Tribune*, 19 July 1924, p. 10. Others also got into the prohibition battle. Dr. Ernest H. Cherrington made the population-to-medal-count argument from a "dry" context. As the Director of the Department of Education of the Anti-Saloon League of America, Cherrington attributed all the American victories to prohibition. He gloated that the United States won more championships than the "representatives of nations handicapped by the liquor traffic." He also noted that dry Finland ranked higher than its population warranted. "Dry Hails Olympic Victory," *New York Times*, 13 August 1928,

- p. 23. See also John Kieran, "Sport of the Times," *New York Times*, 3 August 1928, p. 5; "Hardy Young Finland Aspires to High Athletic Ideal," *New York Times*, 19 August 1928, sec. 4, pp. 6-7.
76. A few Americans took a dour view of Finnish victories. "Right Wing," the pen name of the *New York Evening World's* Charles E. Parker, pointed out that the Finns scored many of their points in events that would not be contested in 1928. "The presence of these events, the double-scoring cross-country run and the 3000-metre team race, can be directly traced to the attempt by European Olympic politicians to beat America by messing up the Olympic program," believed Parker. "Changing the Olympic Games," *World's Work* 48 (September 1924): 476-478. Olympic team coach Lawson Robertson, the track and field wizard from the University of Pennsylvania, maintained that Finland's team strength had been "greatly exaggerated." "Robertson Favors Shorter Program," *New York Times*, 7 August 1924, p. 10.
77. "Fay Says," *Chicago Defender*, 28 July 1928, part 1, p. 9.
78. "Chester L. Washington, Jr., 'Ches' Says: Comments on National and Local Sports," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 August 1928, sec. 2, p. 6.
79. "El Ouafi," *The Negro World*, 18 August 1928, p. 4.
80. Roderick D. McKenzie (1885-1940), a University of Chicago trained sociologist then at the University of Washington, was one of the pioneers of the field of "human ecology." He was an outspoken critic during the 1920s and 1930s of anti-Asian attitudes and legislation on the West Coast. He published prolifically in the *American Journal of Sociology* and wrote several books, most prominently, *Oriental Exclusion* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927) and *The Metropolitan Community* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933). For biographical details see Amos Hawley's introduction to Roderick D. McKenzie, *On Human Ecology*, ed. Amos H. Hawley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).
81. "No 'Superior Nordic' Says White Savant," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 11 August 1928, p. 1; "Nordic Myth of Supremacy Gets Attack," *Chicago Defender*, 11 August 1928, part 1, p. 3; "'Nordic Supremacy' Has No Scientific Validity, Professor Drives Home," *The Negro World*, 11 August 1928, p. 3.
82. "Olympic Results Hurt Nordic Pride, Scientist Declares," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 August 1928, sec. 1, p. 1.
83. In a curious intersection of Olympic and anthropological history, Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne, covering the Amsterdam Games for a press syndicate, identified El Ouafi as a member of the Riffian tribes of North Africa. Knute K. Rockne, "Joie Ray Finished Fifth in Marathon," *Pittsburgh Press*, 6 August 1928, p. 31. Carleton Coon, a Harvard-trained anthropologist whose *The Origin of Races* (New York: Knopf, 1962) served as a basic text for scientific racists in the second-half of the twentieth century, led the Peabody Museum's expedition in the late 1920s among the Rif of North Africa. In his report on the Rif in the section on comparative racial morphology he classified them as an "African Nordic" type. He made no mention of El Ouafi or the Olympic Marathon in his study. Carleton Stevens Coon, *Tribes of the Rif*, Harvard African Studies Series, 9 vols. (Cambridge: Peabody Museum, 1931), 9: 410.
84. "Bow Ye Nordics!" *New York Herald Tribune*, 7 August 1928, p. 16.
85. Elazar Barkin, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (New York: Archon, 1982); Marouf Arif Hasian, *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Pauline M.H. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings: The British Eugenics Society, Its Sources and Critics in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992); Charles Paton Blacker, *Eugenics: Galton and After* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952).
86. See, for instance, Franz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1940); Ruth Benedict, *Race, Science and Politics* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1940).
87. A classic restatement of this earlier twentieth-century idea in the interwar period is John R. Tunis, *Democracy and Sport* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1941).

88. Historian Patrick Miller has characterized this switch in definitions of what accounted for athletic prowess as "moving the goal posts." Miller aptly notes that "though many African Americans had subscribed to the ideal that achievement in sport constituted a proof of equality, a mechanism of assimilation, and a platform for social mobility, they were betrayed in their beliefs and strivings." Miller, "Anatomy of Scientific Racism," 129, 125.
89. The African-American press made the black Olympians into the heroes of the Los Angeles Olympics. Charles Williams declared that they made "a real impression" on the nation. Charles H. Williams, "Negro Athletes in the Tenth Olympiad," *Southern Workman* 61 (November 1932): 449-460. For histories of the Los Angeles Games see Mark Dyreson, "Marketing National Identity: The Olympic Games of 1932 and American Culture," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 4 (1995): 23-48; Steven Riess, "Power Without Authority: Los Angeles Elites and the Construction of the Coliseum," *Journal of Sport History* 8 (Spring 1981): 50-65; David Welky, "U.S. Journalism and the 1932 Olympics," *Journal of Sport History* 24 (Spring 1997): 24-49.
90. "Will Rogers Remarks," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 August 1932, p. 1.
91. David Wiggins, "The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin: The Response of America's Black Press," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 54 (1983): 278-292. The American ambassador in Germany, Frederic M. Sackett, reported to the U.S. Secretary of State that *Der Angriff*, the official newspaper of the Nazi Party, wrote an article headlined "Events We Fail to Understand—Negroes Win—America Rejoices. Jonath The Speediest White Sprinter—Germany Takes Second Place." Commenting on American support of Tolan and Metcalfe *De Angriff* asserted that "for us this sorry spectacle is only a symptom of degeneration. The proud American people rates an Olympic victory higher than its principles. In our eyes, America did not win a victory, but suffered a defeat." Frederic M. Sackett to U.S. Secretary of State, 9 August 1932, State Department Records Division, Record Group 59, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, Maryland.
92. Interestingly, in Japanese-language newspapers in the United States such as Los Angeles' *Rafu Shimpo*, victories by Japanese athletes did spark discussions of racial and national identity among Issei and Nisei groups. See Eriko Yamamoto, "Cheers for Japanese Athletes: The 1932 Los Angeles Olympics and the Japanese American Community," *Pacific Historical Review* 69 (August 2000): 399-429.
93. Metcalfe was born in 1910 in Atlanta and migrated as a child with his family to Chicago. Other African-American sport heroes had similar experiences. Jesse Owens was born in 1913 in Oakville, Alabama, and moved with his family nine years later to Cleveland. Joe Louis was born in 1914 in Lafayette, Alabama, and moved with his family ten years later to Detroit. Jackie Robinson was born in 1919 in Cairo, Georgia, and moved as an infant with his family to Pasadena, California.
94. "Metcalfe Day," *The Crisis* 39 (November 1932): 360.
95. "To Japan," *The Crisis* 39 (September 1932): 295.
96. "Tolan Day," *The Crisis* 39 (October 1932): 327. See also Roy Wilkins, "Negro Athletes at the Olympic Games," *The Crisis* 39 (August 1932): 252-253; Elmer A. Carter, "Prelude to the Olympics," *Opportunity* 10 (August 1932): 246-252.
97. Charles H. Williams, "Negro Athletes in the Tenth Olympiad," *The Southern Workman* 61 (November 1932): 449-460. In "for the 'honor of their country and for the glory of sport,'" Williams was quoting directly from the athlete's oath for the Olympic Games.
98. Elmer A. Carter, "The Negro in College Athletics," *Journal of Negro Life* 11 (July 1933): 208-210, 219.
99. The term "athletic gene" appeared in common usage by the 1940s and 1950s. See Cobb, "Does Science Favor Negro Athletes?"; and Sir Adolphe Abrahams, "Race and Athletics," *The Eugenics Review* 44 (October 1952): 143-145.
100. Carter, "The Negro in College Athletics," 208.
101. The white majority could also read these results as proof of inequality as Patrick Miller, John Hoberman, and David Wiggins have noted, because the new theories about athletic genes often implied that athletic superiority correlated with intellectual inferiority. See Miller, "The Anatomy of Scientific Racism," Wiggins, "Great Speed But Little Stamina," and Hoberman, *Darwin's Athletes*.

102. Robert L. Browne, "A Comparison of the Patellar Tendon Reflex Time of Whites and Negroes," *Research Quarterly of the American Physical Education Association* 6 (May 1935): 121-126. Browne cited literature on this reflex in regards to sprinting including W.W. Tuttle, L.E. Travis, and Theodore Hunter, "Study of the Reflex Time of the Knee-Jerk," *American Journal of Physiology* 82 (1927): 99-105 and W.W. Tuttle and Ruth Lautenbach, "The Relationship Between Reflex Time and Running Events in Track," *Research Quarterly of the American Physical Education Association* 3 (October 1931): 138-143. Browne noted that W.W. Tuttle had supervised his study.
103. Eleanor Metheny's work at Iowa State University on racial difference and sporting prowess had perhaps the strongest influence. See Eleanor Metheny, "Some Differences in Bodily Proportions between American Negro and White Male College Students as Related to Athletic Performance," *Research Quarterly of the American Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation* 10 (December 1939): 33-40. Studies seeking to link racial typologies with athletic abilities or standards of "fitness" became quite popular during the 1930s and early 1940s in the *Research Quarterly*. See, for instance, Frederick W. Cozens, "A Study of the Performance of Japanese Boys and Girls in Physical Education Activities," *Research Quarterly of the American Physical Education Association* 7 (May 1936): 42-44; Edward Haygood Adams, "A Comparative Anthropometric Study of Hard Labor During Youth as a Stimulator of Physical Growth of Young Colored Women," *Research Quarterly of the American Association for Health and Physical Education* 9 (October 1938): 102-108; Morris Steggerda and Christine Evans Petty, "An Anthropometric Study of Negro and White College Women," *Research Quarterly of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* 11 (October 1940): 110-118; Orren Lloyd-Jones, "Race and Stature, A Study of Los Angeles School Children," *Research Quarterly of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* 12 (March 1941): 83-97; Morris Steggerda and C.E. Petty, "ABody Measurements on 100 Negro Males from Tuskegee Institute," *Research Quarterly of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* 13 (October 1942): 275-279; H.T. Taylor, "Certain Implications of the Sickness Records of White and Colored Public School Pupils," *Research Quarterly of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* 13 (October 1942): 309-313; Merrell T. Thompson and Claude Dove, "A Comparison of Physical Achievement of Anglo and Spanish American Boys in Junior High School," *Research Quarterly of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* 13 (October 1942): 341-346.
104. Cobb, "Race and Runners," 3-4. See also W. Montague Cobb, "Does Science Favor Negro Athletes?" *Negro Digest* 5 (May 1947): 74-77.
105. Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931).
106. Frederick Lewis Allen, "Breaking World's Records," *Harper's* 173 (August 1936): 308.
107. Cobb, "Race and Runners," 3. In this endeavor Cobb was continuing in the scholarly battle against racial mythologies launched in 1934 by *The Journal of Negro Education*. In a special issue devoted to "The Physical and Mental Abilities of the American Negro," a group of respected white and black scholars attacked the core assumptions supporting scientific racism, making cases against the claims of hereditary racial differences in intelligence, vigor, and a host of other attributes. Cobb contributed the section on the science of racial differences in "physical constitution." In summarizing Cobb's analysis, the conclusion of the special issue noted that "in view of the obvious racial differences such as hair, color, etc., a surprisingly meager number of physical differences are found and these differences are very likely without survival value." Walter F. Dearborn and Howard H. Long, "The Physical and Mental Abilities of the American Negro: A Critical Summary," *The Journal of Negro Education* 3 (July 1934): 532.
108. Cobb, "Race and Runners," 3-5.
109. Cobb had also been a boxing champion at Amherst. Rankin-Hill and Blakey, "W. Montague Cobb," 78-79.
110. Cobb, "Race and Runners," 3-5.
111. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

112. W. Montague Cobb, "The Physical Constitution of the American Negro," *The Journal of Negro Education* 3 (July 1934): 340-388.
113. Cobb, "Race and Runners," 6.
114. *Ibid.*, 52-56. In a later recitation of the same argument Cobb argued not only that Owens had "Caucasoid" lower extremities but that the white American sprint champion of the 1930s, Frank Wykoff, had "Negroid" lower extremities. Cobb, "Does Science Favor Negro Athletes?" 77. Wykoff and Owens were teammates on the 1936 United States Olympic team. They won a gold medal, setting a world record in the process, in the 4x100 meter relay.
115. Cobb, "Race and Runners," 52.
116. Wiggins, "The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin,"; D.A. Kass, "The Issue of Racism at the 1936 Olympics," *Journal of Sport History* 3 (Winter 1976): 223-235.
117. "Will Rogers Remarks," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 July 1936, p. 1.
118. Charles H. Williams, "Negro Athletes in the Eleventh Olympiad," *Southern Workman* 66 (1936): 59.
119. William J. Baker, *Jesse Owens: An American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 109.
120. One text claims Owens "confounded Nazi racial theories." Paul S. Boyer, Clifford E. Clark, Jr., Joseph Kett, Neal Salisbury, Harvard Sitkoff, and Nancy Woloch, *The Enduring Vision*, 2nd ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1993): 888.
121. "To Be Somebody," part 6 of *The Great Depression*, produced by WGBH-TV, Boston (Alexandria, Va.: PBS Video, 1993).
122. Baker, *Jesse Owens*. See also Jesse Owens, with Paul Neimark, *Blackthink: My Life as Black Man and White Man* (New York: William Morrow, 1970); Jesse Owens, *The Jesse Owens Story* (New York: Putnam's, 1970); Jesse Owens, *I Have Changed* (New York: William Morrow, 1972); Jesse Owens, *Jesse: A Spiritual Autobiography* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1978).
123. "Joe Louis and Jesse Owens," *The Crisis* 42 (August 1935): 241.
124. Indeed, Germany's Racial Policy Office pointed out that Nazi race theories were based on scientific precepts accepted by the international scientific community and that Germany wanted to implement eugenics policies already in practice in the United States. Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection*, 88.
125. Snyder had a long career as a research physiologist at the Johns Hopkins medical school. He published a variety of works in such journals as the *American Journal of Physiology* and the *Quarterly Review of Biology*. He also published extensively in the widely circulated scientific journal *Science*. Among his publications were Charles D. Snyder, "Does the Mammalian Hear Obey the Law for Chemical Reaction Velocities as Influenced by Temperature," *Science*, ns., 25 (21 June 1907): 973-974; Charles D. Snyder, "On an Interpolation Formula Used in Calculating Temperature Coefficients for Velocity of Vital Activities, Together with a Note on the Velocity of Nerve Conduction in Man," *Science*, ns., 34 (29 September 1911): 415-416; Charles D. Snyder, "A Study in Biokinetics," *Science*, n.s., 74 (6 November 1931): 443-449.
126. Charles D. Snyder, "The Real Winners In The 1936 Olympic Games," *Scientific Monthly* 43 (October 1936): 372-374.
127. *Ibid.*
128. *Ibid.*, 374. From his correspondence in the letters to the editor section of *Science* it seems fairly clear that Snyder spent some time in Germany during the 1930s and was a defender of German science and some aspects of the "new Germany" against American critics. Charles D. Snyder, "Two Busts of Great Scientific Men," *Science*, n.s., 76 (28 October 1932): 386; Charles D. Snyder, "On the Courage of Scientists," *Science*, ns., 79 (11 May 1934): 432.
129. Charles D. Snyder, "A Study In The Demographic Distribution of Cultural Achievement," *Scientific Monthly* 46 (March 1938): 261-267. Ironically, W. Montague Cobb also published in *Scientific Monthly*, offering a very different view of the science of race. W. Montague Cobb, "Municipal History from Anatomical Records," *Scientific Monthly* 40 (February 1935): 157-162.

130. Indeed, although Snyder did not mention it, the Soviet Union suffered a peculiar handicap in his ranking system. Tsarist Russia had competed at the Stockholm Olympics of 1912. In its short history between 1917 and 1938—the year of Snyder’s study—the Soviet Union had not competed in an Olympic Games. That made it impossible for the Soviets to win points in one of the three categories Snyder had established. Snyder, ‘A Study In The Demographic Distribution of Cultural Achievement,’ 261-265.
131. *Ibid.*, 266.
132. *Ibid.*
133. *Ibid.*, 267.
134. *Ibid.*
135. *Ibid.*
136. Gossett’s *Race* stressed the breakdown of racist constructions in scientific theory among the intellectual community during and after the 1920s. Gould’s *The Mismeasure of Man* indicated that racially-based conceptions of intelligence continued to exert great influence in scientific circles after the 1920s.
137. Oswald Garrison Villard, “Issues and Men,” *The Nation* 143 (15 August 1936): 185; *The Crisis* 43 (September 1936): cover; “Twilight of the Gods,” 272; “From the Press of the Nation,” 275; “Saga of Jesse Owens,” 267; “Black Auxiliaries,” 273.
138. Tunis, *Democracy and Sport*, 47-48, 27-28. Tunis quoted from Paul Gallico, *Farewell to Sport* (New York: Knopf, 1938), 299.
139. These scientific formulas for measuring population-to-Olympic-medal-production ratios have proven to be popular devices. Indeed, the formula has remained in use as the first century of modern Olympic Games concludes and a second century begins. Reporting on one of the ways in which IBM’s database depicted Atlanta’s 1996 Olympics, *Sports Illustrated*’s Steve Rushin noted that “the U.S. won the most medals (101), but the Yanks ranked 39th in medals per capita, with one for every 2,612,020 American citizens.” Rushin drew no racial conclusions from that statistic. He noted that Tonga finished first in the per-capita medal count while India finished last. Steve Rushin, “Odyssey of Oddities,” *Sports Illustrated*, 12 August 1996, pp. 86-87.
140. John R. Tunis, “An Nation of Onlookers?” *Atlantic Monthly* 160 (August 1937): 141-150.
141. Tygiel’s *Baseball’s Great Experiment* offers the finest history of that chapter in the struggle for racial equality.
142. “Joe Louis and Jesse Owens,” 241.
143. Raymond Gram Swing, “Introduction,” in Tunis, *Sport and Democracy*, viii.
144. “Every citizen *should* have the right to vote. Every citizen *should* have an opportunity to play games,” proclaimed Tunis. Tunis, *Sport and Democracy*, 40, 10.
145. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 257-261.
146. The new paradigm continued to misunderstand that race was a social reality, nor a physical reality. Athletic performance, which common sense perceives as one of the most physical of all human realities, was in fact also a social construct. The genetic structures of athletes and nations were inseparably bound with historic traditions, social conditions, and cultural suppositions. Chance and happenstance played a part in making Olympic medalists. Isolating cause and effect in such a complex process remains beyond the ability of modern science. The scientific racists argued that race mattered in athletic performance. And race did matter as a cultural and not a natural factor.
147. Such attitudes are still commonplace. One example is a 1991 *USA Today* poll that indicated half of the respondents assented to the proposition that “blacks have more natural physical ability” than whites. Hoberman, *Darwin’s Athletes*, 146.
148. That version of American racism was precisely what inspired Harry Edwards’ revolution that sparked the 1968 Olympic protests by African-American athletes. Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: Free Press, 1969).

149. As historian Patrick Miller points out many contemporary defenders of racial bases for intelligence see black athletic prowess as some sort of “compensatory” development for lower levels of intellectual skill. “Anatomy of Scientific Racism,” 123. For examples see Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein, “Race and I.Q.: An Apologia,” *The New Republic* (31 October 1994): 38; Dinesh D’Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 437-441; J. Phillippe Rushton, *Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life History Perspective* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1995), 9.
150. George P. Meade, “An Analytical Study of Athletic Records,” *Scientific Monthly* (June 1916): 596-600; George P. Meade, “Youthful Achievements of Great Scientists,” *Scientific Monthly* 21 (November 1925): 522-532; George P. Meade, “A Negro Scientist of Slavery Days,” *Scientific Monthly* 62 (April 1946): 317-326; George P. Meade, “The Natural History of the Mud Snake,” *Scientific Monthly* 63 (July 1946): 21-29.
151. George P. Meade. “The Negro in Track Athletics,” *Scientific Monthly* 75 (December 1952): 366-371.
152. *Ibid.*, 366-370.
153. *Ibid.*, 370-371.
154. *Ibid.*
155. *Ibid.*, 371.
156. Meade, “An Analytical Study of Athletic Records,” 596.
157. Coon, *The Origin of Races*; Wolpoff and Caspari, *Race and Human Evolution*, 154-172.
158. Abstract of George Meade, “The Negro in Track Athletics,” The Papers of Carleton Stevens Coon, Box 62, File on “Races of the World: Ideas and Clippings,” National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.
159. Coon served as the key expert in a popular essay in *Life* on how the 1964 Tokyo Olympics illustrated racial differences. Marshall Smith, “Giving the Olympics an Anthropological Once-Over,” *Life* 57 (23 October 1964): 81-84.
160. Abstract of George Meade, “The Negro,” Coon Papers.
161. Cobb, “Race and Runners,” 52.