‘To Bring Out The Best That Is In Their Blood’: Race, reform, and civilization in the *Journal of Race Development* (1910–1919)

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**Abstract**

The *Journal of Race Development* [*JRD*], published out of Clark University in the United States between 1910 and 1919, aimed, in its founder’s words, “to present . . . the important facts which bear upon race progress, and the different theories as to the methods by which developed peoples may most effectively aid the progress of the undeveloped”. Its basic premise was that scientific knowledge could harness racial or civilizational “evolution” and turn it into “development”. This article examines that project, the conceptual apparatus that the *JRD*’s writers and editors brought to bear on it, and how racial ideas informed their conceptions of development and progressive social change through elite scientific and political intervention. Central to this project was an organic notion of “civilization” in which “nature” and “culture” did not so much overlap as flow seamlessly one into the other.

**Keywords:** *Journal of Race Development*; American Social Science—History; George Blakeslee; G. Stanley Hall; Thorstein Veblen; Ellsworth Huntington.

The *Journal of Race Development* was published out of Clark University between 1910 and 1919. Under founding editor George Blakeslee, it brought together leading Progressive Era intellectuals with civil servants, missionaries, diplomats, and others. Blakeslee’s co-editor was pioneering psychologist G. Stanley Hall. Over the years contributing editors included sociologists (such as W.E.B. DuBois and Robert Park), political scientists (David Barrows), economists (Thorstein Veblen), anthropologists (Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber), and
geographers (Ellsworth Huntington, later president of the American Eugenics Society), as well as significant numbers of non-academics; contributors ranged from Japanese colonial administrators to John Dewey.

In 1919 the journal changed its name to The Journal of International Relations. Three years later it moved to New York to become the house organ of the Council on Foreign Relations, still published today as Foreign Affairs. This publishing history is fitting because The Journal of Race Development (henceforth ‘the JRD’) represents a tradition that is in some ways lost and in others very much with us. The journal’s pages show the influences of Lamarckian notions of heredity and crude, climate-based evolutionary theory, long since discarded; the confidence with which its writers speak of ‘civilizational’ progress and degeneration now seems quaint. However, in the JRD we can also see the forging of a language of development and a project of social change through elite scientific and political intervention that remains central to the social sciences, most visibly so perhaps in applications like Development Studies.

Robert Vitalis (Vitalis and Markovits 2002; Vitalis 2002, n.d.) places the JRD within a complex of private foundations, academics, government and other associations in America around the turn of the twentieth century that he and co-author Marton T. Markovits call ‘the lost world of development theory in the United States’. In their account, these individuals and institutions organized around questions of ‘development of backward states and races (…) and what kinds of interventions if any are effective’ in promoting it (Vitalis and Markovits 2002, p. 7 [typescript]). For Vitalis, it is in this ‘lost world’, rather than in postwar politics and academia, that we should look for origins of the lines of inquiry and practice that later coalesced around ‘area studies’ and the field of international relations. This article explores how the JRD’s writers and editors conceived their own enterprise, and the analytical tools they brought to bear on it.¹

The most important such tool was an indeterminate boundary between biology and society. The JRD returns time and again to a notion of ‘civilization’ in which race, culture, and political institutions together can be mapped on to evolutionary processes. Evolution itself appears as both natural and cultural, the embodied accretion of influences over time. It is this slippage between nature, culture, and society that made the JRD’s intellectual enterprise feasible. As the title of this article suggests (it is taken from G. Stanley Hall’s editorial in the premier issue), the JRD was dedicated to the proposition that the application of scientific knowledge could bring forth latent possibilities in the ‘blood’ of peoples. That is, in common with most Progressive Era intellectuals, they understood ‘races’ to be the basic units of history and ‘evolution’ to be its motive force. What animated
them was the hope that science could harness evolutionary forces and put them to the service of ‘development’. Of course it is a commonplace of intellectual history that early twentieth-century thought drew fuzzy boundaries between nature and nurture. This article argues simply that the idea of development elaborated in the *JRD* grew out of and depended on that fuzziness, in ways that continue to shape its latter-day applications.

It is another commonplace, this time of recent criticism of contemporary development and modernization discourse, that those discourses are still haunted by racial-evolutionary thought. This article follows Vitalis and Markovits in locating the *JRD* on their genealogical line, and suggests that the ambiguity at the heart of the *JRD*’s project may help us to understand the persistence of their ghosts.

The *JRD* and early twentieth-century racial thought

The *JRD*’s high-powered cohort of writers generally expounded an expansive vision of America’s role in the new century and the possibilities for worldwide progress and peaceful coexistence. For most of them, America was to lead the world in the uplift of the ‘backward’ or ‘dependent races’. This was to include colonial subjects (as in the Philippines), those of sovereign states (as China and Liberia), and ‘dependent’ peoples within America’s own borders (‘the Indian’ and ‘the Negro’). For some, this implied a sort of tutelary, temporary, paternalistic administrative/colonial endeavour; for others it meant something closer to what we would now understand as development aid.

It was almost always presented as a kind of reform. The idea was that even if they could not be erased, the meanings of racial differences could be changed for the better through education and political reform. While who really qualified as ‘backward’, and how much so, were points of difference, it was an article of virtual consensus in the journal that backwardness itself could be accounted for by variations in developmental or evolutionary processes. This drew on conventional scientific and popular wisdom, as well as established doctrine in American social science. Francis Leiber and John Burgess, often cited as founders of American political science, are two of the best-remembered figures to have traced free political institutions to the historical spread of the ‘Teutonic’ races, for example. All the same, unlike many of those working within this tradition, the *JRD*’s editors were critical of a number of aspects of imperial and colonial policy and practice. Indeed, intellectually they shared much with Pan-Africanist ideology (associated of course with contributing editor DuBois), both in seeing themselves as aligned with the aspirations of ‘the darker
people’s’ and as imagining those ‘darker peoples’ to be in need of improvement (Stein 1989, p. 83; cf. also Stein 1986, ch 1).

In the editorial that opens the first issue of the *JRD* in 1910, editor Blakeslee is critical of European colonialism and aims to differentiate his own project by explaining that the journal

aims to present (…) the different theories as to the methods by which developed peoples may most effectively aid the progress of the undeveloped; (…) not how weaker races may best be exploited, but how they may best be helped to be stronger (1/1, p. 1).^2^ This endeavour was to be carried out on American soil as well as abroad—in the ‘struggle’ that he called the ‘key to the past seventy-five years of American history’: finding ‘some solution for the negro [sic] problem’ (ibid, p. 4). Here Blakeslee offers a mild criticism of the American people. A few pages later, G. Stanley Hall is firmer, citing the ‘innumerable modes of extortion and misrepresentation that private greed is still allowed to practice upon (…) the Negro’ in America (1/1, pp. 6–7).

So while the *JRD* generally affirmed the superiority of Anglo-Saxon civilization, it rejected some of the more vicious forms of white supremacist thought that were widely acceptable at the time. For many Progressives, Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner had ‘proved’ that races were, in the words of one prominent historian at the time, ‘the fundamental division of mankind’ with differences that, because they lay ‘in the very blood and physical constitution’, could be altered only by the ‘slow progress of the centuries’ (in Smith 1997, pp. 416–17). Such views were commonplace; the Jim Crow system, unevenly but steadily taking root through the Progressive years was often justified on the basis of ‘science’ which had disproved sentimental or religious notions of human kinship (cf. ibid, pp. 417–18). They also figured in the discourse of anti-immigration societies and politicians, and in modified form in advocacy of U.S. military intervention to curb Japanese power in the Pacific.

The *JRD*, in contrast, mostly (if inconsistently) took the position that the mental and physical capacities of the races were not so deeply different, and occasionally argued for their basic identity. (*JRD* writers were particularly likely to be fans of the Japanese, whose role as a colonizer in Korea and China many saw as parallel to American efforts in the Philippines.) More generally, where others saw in evolutionary theory the scientific explanation of fundamental, permanent racial difference, they found a field of possibility for intervention and positive change. A small piece of evidence that they were understood to be advocates of non-white peoples is a 1914 review in *The American Journal of International Law* of a book edited by
The book in question is a collection of Japan essays from the *JRD*; the reviewer comments that, ‘As was to be expected, these lectures show decided pacific leanings [with] pronounced emphasis on the factors tending to draw the United States and Japan together, and the effect of the whole is to leave the reader feeling that the various contributors are too sanguine’ (Krehbiel 1914, p. 180).

The *JRD* certainly published its share of colonialist rhetoric. To give just one example, in January of 1911 one Wm. S. Washburn, a former U.S. Civil Service Commissioner in the Philippines, contributed an obituary for an American military officer who had served in the Philippines. The title was, ‘A Worthy Example of the Influence of a Strong Man upon the Development of Racial Character’, and it described the deceased as ‘a man who, by temperament, force of character, and training, was fitted to rule as a benevolent despot in a land where ignorance, treachery and tribal enmities bound the inhabitants to barbarism’ (1/3, p. 373). However, they also published articles critical of American attitudes and policies, with the occasional blistering denunciation. A 1912 article called ‘A Literary Legend: “The Oriental”’, by one Wm. Elliot Griffis is a striking example. Griffis begins,

> Writers have created the “Oriental” of imagination, fancy, prejudice and bigotry, who has no counterpart in reality or has [sic] ever existed. It has become a “vested interest”, a staple and stock in trade, a permanent and ever-promising speculation to picture “the Oriental” as a being in human form whose nature is fundamentally different from the “Occidental”. Such a delineation and contrast has mercantile value. It pays in what the American loves so dearly—money (3/1, p. 65).

It does so by enlarging

the sale of tickets at the box office [and] the circulation of the newspapers. It delights the mob (…). The “Orientalism” which sells (…), which gets up periodical war scares and from nervous congressmen compels votes for big battleships, or which is set forth by politicians bidding for votes is not intrinsically different from that which was and is dearly loved in Europe. (…) Yet probably in no country more than in the United States of America, is our legacy of prejudice against the “Oriental” so worked in the interest of dollars and cents (3/1, p. 67).

Some writers went so far as to contest the idea that races can be ranked hierarchically (an October 1914 article by Wilson D. Wallis of the University of Pennsylvania targets Hall’s ‘race children’ theories on
this score) or to advocate race-mixing. That same October 1914 issue contained a piece entitled ‘Ancient Race-Blending Region in the Pacific’, that concludes with the ‘hope the day may come again when the Pacific Ocean will become the intermediary for bringing together the innumerable racial globules that seem past amalgamation’ (5/2, p. 159). However there were always tensions. Intermarriage was occasionally proposed as a solution to the ‘Indian problem’, but this had less to do with racial harmony and integration than with obliterating Indians by gradually turning them into white people. Intermarriage between blacks and whites was never advocated.

Taken as a whole, the JRD presented complex and sometimes heterodox racial attitudes that were nonetheless anchored to common understandings of the workings of race in history (or perhaps more properly of the workings of history through race). In this sense it mirrored the larger climate of Progressivism, from which myriad political projects emerged. Rogers Smith has called Progressivism an ‘elite convergence’ around ‘beliefs in empirical scientific expertise, experimentation, efficiency via rational organization, evolution, pragmatically defined values, and the fundamental reality of human interdependence’ (Smith 1997, p. 412).

A period of significant industrial development, immigration, and urbanization, the first decade-and-a-half of twentieth-century America is remembered on the intellectual front for an upsurge of optimistic reformism. Herbert Croly’s The Promise of American Life, perhaps the paradigmatic statement of centrist Progressivism, argued that American prosperity, free political institutions, and the ‘worthier set of men’ these would create offered ‘the highest hope for an excellent worldly life that mankind has yet ventured’ (Croly 1909, p. 5). It was an era of great enthusiasm for organizations. Where earlier republican theory had held that America’s promise and values could only be realized in a nation of independent small producers, now for many it was modernity itself—big, efficient institutions, including corporations and labour unions, expanded trade and, for some, overseas territory—that would save American democracy from the twin scourges of economic depression and socialism/labour unrest (Ross 1991; Smith 1997; LaFeber 1998). Fuelled by support from industrialists interested in promoting scientific and technical progress, an explosion of professional societies, universities and specialized journals generated opportunities and prestige for a newly self-conscious intellectual class (Ross 1991, pp. 158–61).

It was also in this period that America became conscious of itself as a major player on the world stage, with new territories and newly consolidated spheres of influence in Asia, the Pacific, and the Western Hemisphere, and instituted on its own soil a system of legally sanctioned racial segregation. According to Rogers Smith both major
parties in the 1912 elections as well as Theodore Roosevelt’s Progressive third party portrayed the United States as a ‘modern democratically and scientifically guided nation that was also culturally ordered, unified, and civilized due to the predominance of northern European elements in its populace and customs’. These characteristics, they promised, fitted America not just to ‘cope with a rapidly changing world’, but to ‘lead it’ (Smith 1997, p. 411).

Still, convergence around basic premises did not imply political agreement; left Progressives such as John Dewey called for democratization of both social life and industry, while for Croly centralization of both state and industrial power was the key to the future. On that spectrum, the *JRD* can, by reputation and personnel, be generally situated towards the left, along with many of the intellectuals that Smith and others see as furnishing much of the basis for the reform tradition in American social science (Ball 1995; Torgerson 1995; Smith 1997, pp. 411, 419–24).

The *JRD*’s vision of America in the world

During the decades around the turn of the twentieth-century, American foreign policy makers tended to see American possessions overseas as stepping stones to regional markets. A chief argument of antiannexationists in the late 1890s was that trade could be maintained without political control. For those associated with the *JRD*, these debates had missed the point—these possessions were not only means to the end of trade; they were flagships in a developmental project to which trade would be related as both a contributing factor and an outcome.

In a speech at a 1910 Clark University conference on the Far East, reprinted in the *JRD*, the Commissioner of the U.S. Civil Service in the Philippines makes the connection between domestic Progressivism and the *JRD*’s sense of its own mission: ‘The reform movement is dominant now in America, insisting not only on clean governmental operations, but also the enactment of laws for the betterment of the people, for their moral, mental, and physical elevation’. It is ‘desirable and essential that these reform influences and the power of public opinion in the United States extend to the Philippines’. This will ‘give the Filipino people every opportunity for development’ (1/1, pp. 40–1).

The *JRD* presented its agenda as an alternative to European-style colonialism. In his first and only editorial, cited above, Blakeslee explains that the *JRD* was to be devoted to the ‘general subject of the control of dependencies, a field in which there has already taken place a profound change of feeling and belief’. The European idea of colonies as resources to be exploited is
now giving place to that recently introduced by the United States in the Philippine Islands—the policy of controlling a backward people only so long as it may be necessary to train them to carry on successfully an efficient government (1/1, p. 3).

Hall, too, urges the United States to take a path different from Europe’s. For him, the great ‘possibilities for historic development along new lines’ represented by the ‘ascendant’ races were being stifled by modern colonial policy. In ‘The Point of View Toward Primitive Races’, he wonders what would have happened if the Romans had exploited their European territories the way England was taxing India, or Belgium was exploiting the Congo, or if Japan had been partitioned in 1840. He proclaims that, ‘Our own country, that has so lately become a competitor in the struggle (...) to parcel out among the leading nations all the remnants of the unappropriated territory of the world, ought to lead in this more humane and larger policy’ (1/1, pp. 6–7). He urges the establishment of an African Bureau in Washington, D.C., to exhibit the accomplishments of ‘the African’.

We should strive to make representative colored men self-respecting, (...), in a word, to bring out the best that is in their blood, and to mitigate surely, if ever so slowly, the handicap of race prejudice, for these things alone can give the black man true freedom (ibid, p. 7).

A similar policy should be pursued for ‘the Indian’, or ‘red man’, by putting the government Bureau of Ethnology to greater use. It is interesting to note that here, ‘race prejudice’, appears as failure to properly appreciate race differences. That is, rather than seeing black people as insufficiently rational, for example, whites and blacks themselves should appreciate blacks’ unique traits, the cultivation of which will presumably eliminate race prejudice by eliminating its basis: blacks’ retarded development.

The thrust of Hall’s argument, however, is that while Europe has been exploitive, the United States should pursue a policy of ‘uplift’ that is beneficent and informed by science. In a 1911 article entitled ‘Geographic Factors in South Africa’, one W.M. Davis takes an ominous tone about British administration in that country. What is lacking there, he implies, is ‘A trained understanding of anthropological problems, supported by a sympathetic interest in the well-being of native races’. As it stood, the British risked ‘tempting the majority to violent revolution’ (2/2: 146).

For these writers, America was suited to the task of uplift by its national history and character. The whole of the July 1914 issue is devoted to Latin-America, particularly the development of political and economic institutions and new trade opportunities with the
opening of the Panama Canal. Questions of trade balances, Latin-American perceptions of American intentions, natural resources, and the like are discussed. But the developmental status of Latin-American civilization is central. The issue opens with something like a plea for racial indulgence from a Peruvian Envoy named Federico A. Pezet. In ‘Contrasts in the Development of Nationality in Anglo- and Latin-America’, Pezet argues that Latin America was disadvantaged relative to its northern neighbours in its prospects for developing republican institutions and prosperous economies. For Pezet, Anglo-America was colonized by homogenous Pilgrim families who confronted only relatively weak savages, leaving them plenty of virgin land. Latin America, by contrast, was settled by fortune-seekers from Iberia, who mixed with the stronger, more numerous native population, living off the latter’s wealth and labour rather than establishing homogenous, self-supporting colonies. Closer to Europe both geographically and climatically, North America got the ‘better’ Western European immigrants who were able to assimilate to the republican institutions inherited from the English.

Pezet sums up the Latin-American disadvantage as follows: ‘Latin-America, at the time of its inception into the family of nations, was a group of disassociated military nations, utterly unschooled in self-government, and inhabited in greater part by unfused races’ who ‘from despotism and servitude (…) jumped into the most advanced form of government’ (5/1, pp. 12–13); He ends with a plea for greater understanding and aid in the ‘common quest for human uplift’ (ibid, p. 18).

Here, the United States appears as a potential partner with Latin-American elites in the cause of uplift. This is a twist on a more general theme in the *JRD*, in which the task seems largely to consist in the creation of an elite, or rather of the right kind of elite. Evolution is never clearly defined in the journal—it seems to be less a definite concept than an interpretive grid through which to view the world. However, what is consistently clear is that it has something to do with progressive differentiation: from simple to complex organism; from simple to complex society. This question will be explored more fully below, but for the moment it should suffice to note that in ‘race development’ this seems to translate into the move towards a capitalist division of labour and the appearance of class differentiation (to be distinguished from differentiation based on rank or ‘organic hierarchy’, thought to be a characteristic of more ‘primitive’ society). The developmental task, then, consists in establishing and maintaining such differences.

Articles on the Philippines in particular discuss techniques for creating ‘native’ leadership. Training Filipinos to assume (gradually) higher positions in the civil service is the focus of an article by William
Washburn in the very first number (also cited above). In it, Washburn writes that if Filipinos are 'left to their own resources' they will fall into corrupt oligarchy (1/1, p. 46). Hence, ‘As stated by President Roosevelt in one of his messages to Congress, “It is important that this—the merit—system be observed at home, but it is more important that it be rigidly enforced in our insular possessions”’ (ibid, p. 53). That is, by rewarding honesty, education, and hard work, the U.S.-administered civil service can be the incubator for a class that will lead the Philippines and help to make them ‘in time—probably not in your day nor in mine—partially at least if not fully prepared for self-government’ (ibid, p. 55). These sentiments appear repeatedly, as when contributing editor David Barrows’s A Decade of American Government in the Philippines, 1903–1913 is reviewed in 1915 by Payson Treat, who seconds Barrows’s emphasis on the need for the education of a political class.

Articles devoted solely to American ‘Negroes’ are relatively rare, but one such did appear in 1915. Howard Odum’s ‘Standards of Measurement for Race Development’, emphasizes class differentiation. He endorses the idea that race progress can be measured by ‘the degree to which [a race] tended to increase the proportion of its population above the lower classes … to the increase of the great middle class and especially the upper half’ (5/4, pp. 378–9). And while articles are scarce, books on the subject are frequently reviewed, and generally commended to the extent that they identify unscientific prejudice as the chief factor condemning the large majority of black people to the lower classes and limiting the aspirations—and hence the salutary leadership—of the ‘better class’ (the ‘Notes and Reviews’ section in 1915’s 5/3 is especially rich in this regard).

Sometimes the leadership to be established is by one non-white ‘civilization’ over another. A 1910 article by W. Morgan Shuster on ‘Our Philippine Policies and their Results’ deals with solidifying the dominance of Christianized Filipinos over ‘Moros’ particularly but also over ‘uncivilized’ pagans. This includes establishing a Jim Crow-type system of separate jurisdictions and administrations. Shuster claims that the Filipinos ‘are Christians and by nature peaceable’, and the ‘pagans’ can be reached, but that ‘a strong, quasi-military government is the only one suited to deal with the Moro problem’ (1/1, p. 61).

This view is contradicted in the lead article of the April, 1915, issue by John P. Finley, a Lieutenant Colonel and former Governor of a Moro province in the Philippines. In ‘The Mohammedan Problem in the Philippines’ Finley defends the Moros against such charges, arguing to the contrary that they are highly civilized and should be afforded a much greater level of autonomy, away from the less civilized Filipinos (5/4).
In Liberia, too, the problem is seen as establishing proper leadership and maintaining its control. Two articles on that country, one by the black scholar and diplomat George W. Ellis (‘Dynamic Factors in the Liberian Situation’) and the other by one Emmet J. Scott, both of whom had filled official U.S. government posts there, appear in 1911. Scott’s title poses the question, ‘Is Liberia Worth Saving?’ Both articles answer in the affirmative, presenting the ‘Americanized’ Liberians as a vanguard civilizing their race-fellows on the continent, and suggest that this experiment is threatened by European power struggles in the region and by recalcitrant natives. The ‘Americanized Liberians’ ‘have helped to uplift the natives—to no considerable degree, it is true, but nevertheless to an appreciable degree’ (Scott 1/3, p. 301). To fail to support the Liberian government against both threats would be to sacrifice those gains and also to betray the trust of the Liberian elite, who should be supported in their efforts to establish control over the countryside.

Uplift did not have to be altruistic. Apart from short pieces by the vice-president of Miami University and the Director of the International Bureau of Students (arguing for the professionalization of Latin-American universities, and increased exchange programmes, respectively) the Latin-American issue discussed above is uncharacteristically short on the rhetoric of benevolence. For example, ‘The Development of Our Latin-American Trade’ by American businessman John Hays Hammond emphasizes America’s need for Latin-American markets (5/1, pp. 44-8); and Hiram Bingham, of the Yale history department, in ‘The Probable Effect of the Opening of the Panama Canal on Our Economic Relations with the People of the West Coast of South America’ calls for caution against over-exuberant investing, noting that the ‘Indians are not ready for a boom’ (5/1, p. 64).

W.D. Boyce’s article on the ‘Advantages of Making the Canal Zone a Free City and a Free Port’ is more boosterish, but his stated motivations and his view of the disadvantages facing Latin America are not exceptional, bringing together the notions of developmental disadvantage (particularly its evolutionary and climatic origins) with recommendations for American businessmen and policy-makers. Boyce was the publisher of *The Saturday Blade* and *The Chicago Ledger*. He begins with an overview of the history of human settlement of the Americas, noting that understanding South America’s commercial development requires that one ‘first analyze the original stock from which these people sprang’ (5/1, p. 68). In his view, the first settlers came from Asia across the Bering Strait, and hunted and fished their way southward. Thus employed, ‘The Indian improved until he reached the warm country near the Rio Grande, and there in the hot climate, where life was easy he began to
deteriorate’ (ibid, pp. 68–9). (The temperate zones of the Andes, for example, allowed for the development of Inca civilization.) His prescription is an energetic policy of free trade and of doing business ‘everlastingly on the square’. As to the latter, he remarks that Latin-Americans ‘are not used to it, but they will like it once they find it genuine’ and come to prefer trade with the United States over Europe (ibid, p. 83).

**Evolution, change and heredity**

As noted, turn-of-the-century social thought was deeply influenced by evolutionary concepts. Most of these long preceded Darwin, and conceived of evolution as a basically unilinear process—from lower to higher, less differentiated to more differentiated, savage to civilized—in which the social, cultural, and biological traits of a group developed in tandem. It was a framework in the popular scientific imagination perhaps more for understanding human than animal differences, and its main application and evidence was the explanation of differences in appearance, customs, religion and manual arts among groups of people in the world.

Among the most prominent early explanations for such biological change came from Auguste Lamarck, a French zoologist and botanist writing at the turn of the nineteenth century. Known as the doctrine of heritability of acquired characteristics, Lamarckianism held that adaptation to new conditions could lead to structural modification in adult individuals; new actions, ‘becoming habitual’ could ‘occasion (…) the development of the organs which execute them’ (in Stocking 1968, pp. 238–9). These new traits, or ‘organs’ were then passed down to offspring. With the publication of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, the subsequent rediscovery of Mendel’s experiments on heredity, and a campaign by August Weismann against Lamarckian ideas, the processes and mechanism of evolution became the subject of heated and sometimes vicious debate. However, Lamarckianism was not wholesale discarded, and elements of Lamarckian thought were mixed with theories of natural selection and even, as we shall see, of mutation, both by ‘neo-Lamarckians’, and by others who incorporated them less self-consciously (cf. Stocking 1968; Ross 1991; Reed 1996).

In his influential work on Lamarckianism in American Social Science, George Stocking argues that, ‘The idea that acquired characteristics might be inherited was stated or implied in the work of so many [turn-of-the-century] writers that it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that they were primarily reflecting a widespread popular scientific attitude whose roots lay deep in the western European cultural tradition’ (Stocking 1968, p. 242). This may help to explain why the logic, if not the substance, of Lamarckianism is so
prevalent in the pages of the *JRD*, despite the fact that in Stocking’s view, the fight in the biological sciences had been by 1910 pretty much settled, with the heritability of acquired characteristics on the losing side.

The great majority of *JRD* articles focus on differences of education, customs, and living standards rather than biology. However, physical evolution was clearly understood as a related concern: many articles focused primarily on various aspects of biological evolution and, as we have seen, even topics that would seem quite far from questions of biology (like Boyce’s article on eliminating tariffs in the Panama Canal Zone) were often prefaced by a brief overview of a few millennia of human migration and settlement. Articles on racial diversification in the Pacific region, the probable racial origins of the indigenous people of Latin-America, the geographical origins of the peculiar racial characteristics of South Africa’s ‘native races’, white adaptation to tropical and subtropical climates, etc., were published without fuss; their inclusion required no justification, and no major discontinuity in perspective appears between these biologically oriented writers and their more socially minded colleagues.

This should not be surprising. As noted, most intellectuals at this time felt no need for clear-cut distinctions between nature and society. In Stocking’s view, the lack of an autonomous subject matter doomed American social science in this period to be tentative and ineffectual. For him, the central problem for the social sciences in the early twentieth century ‘was not their domination by notions of biological or racial determinism, but rather their obfuscation by a vague sociobiological indeterminism, a “blind and bland shuttling” between race and civilization’ (Stocking 1968, p. 265, emphasis original). It is clear this ‘shuttling’ was a crucial feature of what was going on in the *JRD*, but it hardly restricted their undertakings. On the contrary it appears central to the uplift project, as a way of simultaneously maintaining the boundaries between groups, establishing science and scientists as the authoritative source of practical knowledge about those boundaries, and giving science a clear entry point for directing change.

Both the indeterminate boundaries between what is natural and what is social and the confusion of Lamarckian, Darwinian, and Mendelian understandings of evolution are abundantly in evidence in a 1913 article by contributing editor Thorstein Veblen, entitled ‘The Mutation Theory and the Blond Race’. In this article, Veblen explores what he describes as ‘two distinct but closely related captions: The Origin of the Blond Type, and the Derivation of the Blond Culture’, in the light of evolutionary theory in which change originates in mutation rather than through ‘usages’ (4/3, pp. 492). His thesis is that there is one true ‘dolicho-blond’ in Europe, ‘in the lands immediately about
the narrow Scandinavian waters’, and that the other ‘blond groups’ are in fact ‘hybrid types’ (ibid, p. 502). Veblen’s interest in this topic, and his desire to isolate the natural germ of what he in other works characterized as the most progressive world culture, is noteworthy in itself. But in this context it is important to note what he makes of the new science of the day.

A central problem for the Darwinian theory of natural selection was the ‘origin of the fittest’; that is, where did variation come from in the first place? Veblen perceived correctly that Mendel’s experiments would hold the key to that problem, though as it happens he was wrong as to how they would do so. What Veblen does, rather, is turn mutation theory into a theory of adaptation that mimics Lamarckianism in many important respects. That is, in his view, the ‘Mendelian postulate that the type is stable except for such a mutation as shall establish a new type’ raised ‘at least the presumption that such a mutation will take place only under exceptional circumstances, that is to say, under circumstances so substantially different from what the type is best adapted to as to subject it to some degree of physiological strain’ (ibid, p. 495). In this case, the ‘parent stock’ entered Europe from Africa some time in the late quaternary period, where it was ‘exposed to notably novel conditions of life, such as would be presumed...to tend to throw the stock into a specifically unstable (mutating) state’ (idem). That is, external conditions would call forth appropriate mutations, in enough individuals that while they would inevitably have to mix with the parent stock, a new, ‘pure type’ could in time arise. Moreover, culture itself could be among these environmental factors: ‘characteristic forms’ arise ‘in adaptation to the peculiar circumstances of environment and culture under which each particular local population is required to live’ (ibid, p. 504).

In this scheme, geography and culture, the two main stimuli for change in neo-Lamarckian theory, retain their causal centrality. There is no room for the random, purposeless quality imputed to mutation by later understandings. Evolution thus remained something that could be directed—if culture could prompt mutation, changes in education, administration, and industrial organization could still write new characteristics into the bodies of populations. Which of course was central to a project of uplift in which racial distinctions were entirely ‘real’ and important but at the same time remediable.

We have already seen that just as races can ‘develop’, they can also decline, as in Boyce’s treatment of the native populations in South and Central America. This notion has two important implications that underlie much of the concern about development in general. Firstly, the opposite of ‘development’ would not necessarily be stasis: it would more probably be exploitation by more developed peoples, decline, degeneration, and possible ‘race war’. This anxiety is alluded to more
often than directly stipulated, but it is nevertheless palpable, parti-
cularly in discussions of the situation in the Pacific and of what Davis in
the 1911 article cited above referred to as ‘the advance of a civilized
race into the land of an uncivilized race’ (2/2, p. 139) in Southern
Africa and the Americas.

Also implied is that whites, too, face possible collective decline. This
was a pervasive anxiety in the context of industrialization and the
‘closing’ of the frontier—the end of the republican image of America
as a land of independent small producers, immune to European
decadence. Ross argues that this anxiety produced a crisis among
intellectuals concerned to replace this nineteenth-century vision of
America’s exceptional destiny with one appropriate to a new age. This
crisis in turn produced a range of responses, from the call for imperial
expansion to replace the lost frontier, to a number of populist and/or
antimodernist rejections of cities and industrial production, or
alternatively to the embrace of modernity that characterized most
Progressive intellectuals. For this last group,

the realization of American liberal and republican ideals depended
on the same forces that were creating liberal modernity in Europe,
on the development of capitalism, democratic politics, and science.
America’s unique condition did not block the full effects of
modernity on this continent, but rather supported it (Ross 1991,
p. xv).

However, this did not mean that America’s ideals would be realized
automatically. Rather, science would determine how the course of
modernity could best be directed. It was this spirit, in large part, that
animated the academic reformers of the era; it was certainly this spirit
that animated the group who produced the JRD.

While the JRD did not advocate expansion by force of arms, nor
settler colonialism, it consistently presented America’s future as bound
up with that of the ‘non-Western’ world, and advocated outward-
looking policies. However, the new, internationalist world they
envisioned carried inherent dangers. What would happen to whites
as they ventured into the territories of ‘the dark races’? As we have
seen, Latin America was sometimes presented as a cautionary tale on
that score (even by Latin Americans). The writer who paid the most
thorough attention to this question was contributing editor Ellsworth
Huntington.

As noted, Ellsworth Huntington was a leading geographer who later
became the head of the American Eugenics Society. He was author of
a number of books as well as articles in nine of the major Geography
journals and more than forty other publications, ranging from the
American Historical Review to The Nation. 4 In his first major book
The Pulse of Asia (1907), he elaborated the ‘Huntington Theory’, which suggested that significant and irregular climate changes, probably caused by changes in the sun, had profoundly influenced human culture. In his view, weather had stimulating (storms) and stultifying (unchanging heat) effects on the human constitution; the worldwide distribution of civilization could be explained by the distribution of temperate climates. His theories were enormously influential, and whether they read him or not, most writers on evolutionary topics subscribed to some version of his basic premises.

Huntington published four articles in the JRD: ‘Physical Environment as a Factor in Turkey’ (1911, 1/4), ‘Geographical Environment and Japanese Character’ (1912, 2/4), ‘A Neglected Factor in Race Development’ (1917, 7/2) and ‘The Adaptability of The White Man to Tropical America’ (1915, 5/4). The latter argues that the riches of tropical America and Africa will be developed only with the ‘help’ of ‘people of European origin’. The stultifying heat and evenness of the weather in the tropics, as well as the ease of life, are ‘conditions which for ages have acted as handicaps to every race whose lot has been cast in’ the tropics (5/4, p. 187). Such conditions make one ‘loath to work’ in general; prolonged exposure to them, turns such lethargy into a racial trait. He suggests that a few generations in such regions could cause a like, degeneration among whites. (This would be compounded by the fact that ‘Experience in all parts of the world shows that the presence of an inferior race in large numbers tends constantly to lower the standards of the dominant race’ [ibid, p. 193].) The remedies, once again, were scientific and institutional: Huntington looked to advances in medical science to offset the debilitating effects of tropical disease and to (unspecified) advances in hygiene and institutional arrangements to offset the generational decline.

Concluding thoughts

A notable feature of the varied articulations of American race science throughout the last century and into this one is their tenaciousness. The evolutionary and hierarchical schemas take multiple scientific blows, undergo infinite adjustments, and are put to any number of sometimes opposed purposes, but they persist nonetheless. We can see this happening in the JRD—Lamarckianism is challenged, but its broadest implications remain in place. The basic premises, about how to think of people in social units, how those can develop and improve, and who is fit to direct that process, reappear in new ways. The very evolutionary theory that for some proved the immutable inferiority of non-Anglo-Saxons, to many of the writers in the JRD signalled a field of almost unbounded possibility. For the most part they allied themselves with the disadvantaged, ‘developing’ peoples of the world.
And they devoted themselves to promoting patterns of social organization and behaviour that, once taken root, would gradually erase those disadvantages.

In this sense, the JRD gives us a sense of an early moment of a research tradition with a long and probably unbroken history up to today. This tradition, to put it crudely, offers diagnosis and prescription for ‘sick’ groups and societies. Of course, it does not and has never completely defined the ‘development project’. Marxist development analysis, for example, locates the predicament of the ‘Third’ or ‘developing’ world in core-periphery capitalist relations (though it has often recruited the language of evolutionary ‘stages’); another tradition examines the legacies of colonialism; still others focus on practical conditions for and constraints on economic growth in an increasingly globalized economy, the possibilities for state v. market-led development, and so on. However, all these traditions have, to varying degrees, participated in another, larger tradition of ranking societies on a scale of less to more developed, and seeking the causes (at least proximate) of those differences in something called society or culture. Examples of this are perhaps today most visible in the increasing concern with such topics as social capital and the development of democratic political culture, both areas in which researchers have consistently focused on the socio-cultural determinants of development.

This is not intended to condemn that tradition as racist by association with the earlier, much more frankly racialized and biological understanding of ‘development’ exemplified by the JRD. While the notions of civilizational conflict and development have certainly gained renewed currency in comparative politics and development circles, as indicated by the reception of such works as Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), much work produced under these rubrics resists these frameworks. In any event, to make such a blanket claim would be unhelpful. However, uncovering what Vitalis (drawing on Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, and others) has called the ‘unspoken history’ of racial thought in American social science (Vitalis 2002, n.d.)—is useful in a number of ways. First and most straightforwardly, it helps to correct and hopefully to deepen our understanding of the historical record. This deeper understanding, in turn, might be brought to bear on more ‘presentist’ concerns, such as self-consciousness about the baggage of our own social scientific categories and traditions.

Disciplinary lore holds, for example, that political science in America has largely been silent about race. The fact that the JRD counted political scientists among its editors and contributors is a small piece of evidence to the contrary. The very question moreover raises the issue of how this perception may underwrite a blindness to
the racialism inhering in some of the field’s most basic categories, such as social or interest groups, to say nothing of the idea of ‘black’ or ‘Latino politics’.

The case of Anthropology is instructive here. Many anthropologists responded to a blizzard of criticism from outside and within the discipline in recent decades, mostly focused on the discipline’s role as the ‘handmaiden of colonialism’, by developing a programme of ‘anthropologizing up’: studying how powerful institutions, such as governments, academia, and even the natural sciences, deploy and maintain that power. This is not to say that we should all reorient our study towards the powerful (a recommendation that would bemuse political scientists) but rather that new and fruitful research programmes can arise from this kind of serious self-examination.

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Notes

1. This article concentrates particularly on the first few years that the Journal was published, partly for the sake of manageability, but also partly because the tone and focus of the journal changes somewhat with the outbreak of World War I and America’s entry into it.
2. Rather than including full citations to JRD articles, as much reference information as possible has been integrated into the text, with citations given by volume and issue number, followed by page, as in (1/1, p. 1).
3. This article was included in the book discussed by Krebhiel, mentioned above.
4. This publication history is drawn from Visher (1948).

References

*The Journal of Race Development* [JRD] was published by Clark University in Worcester, MA, from 1910 to 1919. Citations to particular articles are integrated into the text and hence excluded here.

CROLY, HERBERT 1909 *The Promise of American Life*, New York: Macmillan
HUNTINGTON, ELLSWORTH 1907 *The Pulse of Asia: A Journey in Central Asia Illustrating the Geographic Basis of History*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin and Co


—— n.d. ‘Black Atlantic’, unpublished chapter from ms., in progress

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