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On Academic Blood Tests

One of my brightest students, who is completing his Ph.D., was chosen by the personnel committee of a major university to become an assistant professor in the university's sociology department. He was turned down, according to the chairman of the committee, because a large number of the faculty members preferred—a Chicano. (Blacks and women had been appointed in previous years.) My student, whom the faculty never saw, wrote to me:

... my great grandmother was a full blooded Minnesota Sioux Indian, and was the sister of Chief White Cloud who led the 1862 Sioux uprising against Fort Snelling in St. Paul. If only my great grandmother hadn't been so socially aware (she married a French trapper) and had stayed on the reservation where she belonged, I might be in better stead today!

I shared the information with my colleagues, but many of them gave a higher rating to a "100 percent Chicano" than to an unknown quantity of Indian blood.

My colleagues, it seems, must avoid being called racist, male chauvinist, or square, at all costs; can anyone build up his courage to the point where he can face such charges? And, if they are to retain a "balanced" faculty, how can they hire anyone who does not fit into a color chart, which tells them how many black, brown, red, yellow (and white) professors a distinguished university needs?

Don't they deserve our sympathy? As the case at hand illustrates, what are these poor souls to do when they must choose between members of different minorities, or—God forbid—between, say, an Oriental-Black and a Jewish-Chicano? Should not the first opening be reserved for a Gay, Gypsy Girl, under 30?

Tests of our genes will not do as a criterion of hiring, since most of our biological inheritance is not divided along racial lines. Blood tests are even less cooperative, since, embarrassingly, all of us have red blood. And, some of the most "backward" groups have the same blood type as the most "advanced" ones.

The social scientists in particular ought to be ashamed of themselves. Those treacherous creatures labored, for nearly two generations, to show that the concept of race is without scientific foundation. Many Negroes, they maintained, are not black; many Orientals are not yellow, and many Jews have no kinky hair. And—they argued quite convincingly—even if a person has one of the "racial" marks, he often has none of the others. They used to urge, in the forgotten days when liberal values ranked high on the campus, that we all think about members of minorities as people who differ in economic, social, and cultural background, not as people of different races. Now, the fashion is to see color even where there are obviously other factors at work.

Thus we face, in effect, two choices. We could launch a crash program to produce biological and social tests to secure racial identifications and provide each campus with a color master plan, asking future applicants to send in an authenticated family tree (snapshots are unreliable)—or, we could stop checking people's genes, genitalia, and gender as we retain scholars and educators.

Of course, social justice must be advanced, but it will not be served long by applying *ad absurdum* racism in reverse. What we need are more, broader, and stronger programs to help the less prepared to meet the same academic criteria now applied to those who had a more fortunate background.—AMITAI ETZIONI, *Chairman, Department of Sociology, Columbia University, and Director, Center for Policy Research*