

Comment

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Race, IQ, and the APA Report on *The Bell Curve*

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Neisser et al.'s (February 1996) report is evenhanded on many issues, but on the issue of race, it egregiously erred and concluded that "there is certainly no . . . [empirical] support for a genetic interpretation" (p. 97). Having just written *Race, Evolution, and Behavior* (Rushton, 1995), which describes three distinct racial profiles ranging over 60 anatomical and social variables, including brain size, in which East Asians are at one end of the continuum, Africans are at the other, and Europeans regularly fall between the two, I was struck by the amount of evidence sidestepped by Neisser et al. The origins of racial differences in IQ obviously need to be considered as fairly from the hereditarian perspective as from the environmentalist perspective.

The omitted evidence includes the following: (a) The distributions of racial differences in IQ and speed of decision making found within the United States occur internationally. (b) IQ subtests high in heritability within races predict racial differences better than do subtests low in heritability. (c) Transracial-adoption studies find that East

Asian adoptees grow to score higher on IQ tests than do White adoptees but Black adoptees grow to score lower. (d) Mixed-race offspring average IQ scores between those of the two parental groups. (e) Regression to the mean is greater for Black children of high IQ parents and siblings and less for Black children of low IQ parents and siblings than it is for their White counterparts. (f) IQ scores relate to brain size, and the worldwide distribution of brain size parallels that of IQ. (g) White-Black differences in brain size disappear when Whites and Blacks are matched for IQ. (h) Other variables such as crime, testosterone, the rate of dizygotic twinning per 1,000 births (caused by a double ovulation), and sexual behavior show the same international racial patterns as do IQ scores, with Europeans averaging intermediate IQ scores relative to those of Asians and Africans, thereby implying IQ differences are part of a broader based life history with roots deep in evolution.

It is not as though the aforementioned empirical relationships are completely unknown. Several years ago, they—or facts similar to them—led a plurality of experts in behavioral genetics and psychometrics to give their judgment that the weight of the evidence showed that Black-White IQ differences were partly genetic in origin (Snyderman & Rothman, 1987). But this assessment was not mentioned by Neisser et al. (1996).

Because the APA report (Neisser et al., 1996) is likely to have a wide readership and be used against the conclusions in *Race, Evolution, and Behavior* (Rushton, 1995), I point out some of its other omissions, contradictions, and implausibilities. For example, Asian Americans were assigned an average IQ of about 98 on the basis of a review by Flynn (1991). But Lynn (1993) showed that Flynn had "overcorrected" downward an original review by Vernon (1982), not cited by the APA task force, which found that Asian American IQ averaged 106. Omitted, too, was *The Bell Curve's* own National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data showing an Asian American IQ of 106 (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994, p. 273). This particular lapse is especially curious given that it was the debate over *The Bell Curve* that led APA to set up its task force in the first place!

Additional studies of racial differences within the United States have confirmed the Asian-European-African gradient. Lynn (1996) examined the most recent standardization data of the Differential Ability Scale based on a representative sample of the population stratified by age, sex, race, geographical location, urban-rural areas, parental socioeconomic status, and preschool enrollment. The main sample consisted of 2,260 children aged 6-17 years. The Asian children's IQ averaged 107, the White children's IQ averaged 103, and the Black children's IQ averaged 89.

Although the report (Neisser et al., 1996) admitted that Asian Americans did better than European Americans on a range of aptitude tests (e.g., American College Test [ACT], Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT], Graduate Record Examination [GRE], Medical College Admission Test [MCAT]), which are known to measure reasoning ability and to correlate highly with IQ, these were described as "content-oriented achievement tests" (p. 92) and linked to the high grades Asian Americans gain in school. Higher Asian IQ scores found in Asia were also disparaged but, again, with an acceptance of their superior school achievement. The generally greater performance of Asians despite equal or lower IQ was attributed to "cultural attitudes toward learning," "structural differences in the [Asian] schools," and possibly even "spatial ability" and "gene-based temperamental factors" (p. 92). Neisser et al. seemed to use anything to avoid the evidence of a higher Asian IQ score!

The APA report (Neisser et al., 1996) did not balance the equation by mentioning the gene-based temperament factors that may play a role in Black underachievement. Nor did it mention the IQ scores of Blacks outside the United States—in the Caribbean, Britain, Canada, or sub-Saharan Africa. For example, on the basis of more than a dozen independent studies and a review by Lynn (1991), I (Rushton, 1995) estimated the sub-Saharan African IQ to be 70. Subsequent studies have confirmed this low African IQ. For example, Zindi (1994), a Black Zimbabwean, matched 204 12-14-year-old Black Zimbabwean students and 202 White English students from London inner-city schools on sex, educa-

tional level, and working-class background and found the sub-Saharan African mean on both verbal and nonverbal tests was about 70.

Postulating some genetic variance is indispensable to explaining the consistency of the East Asian–European–African gradient in IQ. A mixed model, say 50% genetic and 50% environmental, fits the data better than either the 100% environmental or the 100% genetic alternative. It is difficult to disagree with the conclusion arrived at by Charles Murray following his review of the aftermath to *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) that, on the issue of racial differences, social science is corrupt. Yet, it is heartening to think that it is the vitality of behavioral science research that shows up sterility and points the way to a more encompassing science.

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Evading the Controversy

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Instead of ameliorating the controversy surrounding Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve*, Neisser et al. (February 1996) may have accomplished the reverse.

Unclear Mandate

With over 85,000 members, 48 divisions, and involved governance, the American Psychological Association (APA) is characterized more by contrasts than consensus. Although the Council of Representatives and the Board of Directors function for APA as a whole, the Board of Scientific Affairs (BSA) and such recommend to Council and the Board. Thus, a BSA task force should be judicious in posing its mandate. Claiming input from APA groups, Neisser et al. (1996) quoted a line from an unidentified source: "This is a 'Report of a Task Force Established by the American Psychological Association'" (p. 77). When crediting assistance, authors typically accept errors and omissions as their own. Reversing that tradition in their puzzling opening, Neisser et al. implied that their mandate is broad based. Unless Council and the Board affirm the report, any implication that it represents APA as a whole is unwarranted.

Bypassing the Real Issues

Neisser et al. (1996) delimited *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) furor to a "debate about the meaning of intelligence test scores and the nature of intelligence" (p. 77) and said their charge "was to prepare a dispassionate survey of the state of the art: to make clear what has been scientifically established, what is presently in dispute, and what is still unknown" (p. 78). Seeking to deal "with science rather than policy" (p. 78), as if the two are easily separated and as if *The Bell Curve* did, they omitted a preliminary review of the problem (i.e., the controversy) and process details that could have explained their constrained view of the national furor.

Following publication of *The Bell Curve*, an avalanche of radio and television debates and published reviews embedded the book's title into the lexicon. *The Economist* ("How Clever Is Charles Murray?," 1994) credited Murray as one "who can create a sensation big enough to displace O. J. Simpson in the headlines and on the covers of magazines" (p. 29) and fixed the crux of the controversy as follows:

Most explosively, he [Murray] claims that intelligence is substantially inherited. . . . In the Murray–Herrnstein view, racial differences in IQ scores—have very little to do with any cultural bias in the tests or environmental influences, and very much to do with genes. . . . *It is this genetic and racial argument that has touched off the furore over the book* [italics added]. (p. 29)

Intelligence and IQ testing per se are not the predominant issues of the *Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) debate or the book. Rather, IQ as determined by socioeconomic status and race, particularly Black–White, and policy distinctions between the "cognitive elite" from those destined to the "custodial state" were at the heart of *The Bell Curve's* arguments and the national quarrel. In the chapter "Ethnic Differences in Cognitive Ability," Herrnstein and Murray wrote, "This brings us to the flashpoint of intelligence as a public topic: the question of genetic differences between the races" (p. 295). How could Neisser et al. (1996) have perceived the book and controversy in sharp contrast to the book's authors and their many critics?

Parts Versus the Whole

In textbook style (raising the question of intended audience), Sections 1 and 2 of Neisser et al.'s (1996) article survey theories of intelligence and the correlates of intelligence tests (e.g., what is r or socioeconomic status?). Section 3 introduces rudiments of behavior genetics (e.g., h^2 , twin studies), and Section 4 completes the old nature–nurture paradigm. Why did they fail to cite Plomin and McClearn (1993), an important APA book that promotes consensus for the nature and nurture paradigm and rapprochement between hereditarians and environmentalists? Also, knowledgeable opponents of behavior genetics are omitted—biological geneticists (e.g., Vogel & Motulsky, 1986, pp. 608–609) and evolutionary psychologists (e.g., Tooby & Cosmides, 1992). By weeding segmented, select concepts instead of plowing the controversy, the task force tailored "knowns" and "unknowns" with procrustean arbitrariness. Section 5 on sex and ethnicity differences evades the controversy through stereotypic pabulum. Closing with "The Genetic Hypothesis," a topic meriting extensive analysis, the half-page cites articles by hereditarians and one each on "mixed" children and growing plant seeds in differing conditions. Although Neisser et al. said that "there is not much direct evidence on this point, but what little there is fails to support the genetic hypothesis" (p. 95), this brief section, perhaps an afterthought, cannot possibly address the fundamental delusion of using biological race as a variable and factor.