

## *Race and Crime: International Data 1990*

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A debate has arisen over whether the disproportionate race differences in U.S. crime statistics, i.e., Asians, Europeans, Africans, are generalizable internationally. Building on earlier work, Rushton (1990) collated data from the 1984 and 1986 Interpol yearbooks and found that African and Caribbean countries reported twice the rate of violent crime (an aggregate of murder, rape, and serious assault) as do European countries and three times the rate as do Pacific Rim countries. Summing the crimes and averaging the years gave significant differences per 100,000 population of, respectively, 143, 74, and 44.

These results have been contested. The main empirical reasons given for rejecting them are that (a) the category of race is too poorly defined to allow reliable classification, (b) the data in the source books contain too many errors to be reliable, and (c) the predicted direction of the results do not always occur (Cernovsky & Litman, 1993a, 1993b; Gabor & Roberts, 1990; Roberts & Gabor, 1990). For example, Cernovsky and Litman (1993b) selected a subset of countries from the 1984 and 1986 Interpol yearbooks, extended the crime base to include breaking and entering and theft of motor cars, and showed that some African countries had lower crime rates than some European countries.

These and other critiques have been discussed, along with many additional data, in my book *Race, Evolution and Behavior* (1994a). Because the figures for some crimes are highly dependent on the availability of goods to be stolen (e.g., "Theft of Motor Cars") it seemed best to focus on the less ambiguous categories of violent crime where definitions had been provided in the Interpol yearbooks. To ensure a replicable pattern existed I consulted the most recent (1990) yearbook and tabulated the rate of murder, rape, and serious assault per 100,000 population for 76 countries (Rushton, 1994b). The 23 predominantly African countries reported a statistically higher rate than 41 Caucasian countries or 12 Asian countries. The rate per 100,000 population, respectively, for

murder, was 13, 5, and 3; for rape, 17, 6, and 3; and for serious assault, 213, 63, and 27. Summing the crimes gave figures, respectively of 240, 75, and 32 per 100,000.

The racial pattern is not due to the particular selection of countries. If other, more homogeneous sets are chosen, contrasting north-east Asia, central Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa, the proportions remain similar. Nor does the pattern alter when comparing black Central American or Caribbean countries with white/Amerindian ones.

In sum, these new data are consistent with the evidence from Ellis (1989), Rushton (1990, 1994a), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), that people of Asian descent commit relatively fewer acts of violent crime than do those of European or African descent. Explanations include socioeconomic factors influencing socialization, prenatal insult, and gene-based factors of testosterone, temperament, cranial capacity and IQ.

### References

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### *On the Evolutionary Roots of Politics*

By Tatu Vanhanen. Sterling Publishers, 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016 USA, 1992, \$30 (hdbk.).

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The basic thesis of Vanhanen's book can be stated as follows: Politics is "constrained by its evolutionary roots and...a theory on the evolutionary roots of politics might explain many important aspects of contemporary politics, particularly universal regularities in political behaviour and structures" (p. 17). This thesis develops in two stages, which correspond to the organization of the book. Part One introduces the basic components of Vanhanen's theoretical model concerning the evolutionary foundations of politics. Part Two applies this model to contemporary political problems: hierarchical power structures, ethnic conflicts, multipartism, democratization of political systems, women's under-representation in politics, global political disorder, and the growth of world population and consumption. Under each of these headings, Vanhanen uses his model to generate predictions, some of which are tested using cross-cultural data. My comments will be directed toward the theoretical section, Part One, which is divided into four substantive chapters and a summarizing outline.

Chapter 1 focuses on the evolutionary underpinnings of political behavior. It begins

by examining prevailing social science explanations. This literature seems thus far not to have produced a generally accepted definition of politics, although competition for resources and power is a recurring theme. Vanhanen argues that this competition, which varies both historically and cross-culturally in form and intensity, may be conceptualized ultimately as an expression of the more general Darwinian competition for scarce resources. A strong point of the author's analysis is its adherence to the scientific dictum of focusing initially upon the recurring features of a

phenomenon (e.g., political behavior) and explaining them in universally applicable terms. Vanhanen's emphasis on ultimate causation thereby augments traditional social science analyses that are more temporally and spatially restricted.

The second chapter opens by proposing that the "evolutionary roots of politics are in our assumed behavioural predispositions to adopt and learn particular [adaptive] behaviour patterns in the political struggle for power and resources" (p. 29). The predispositions are conceptualized as the evolved causes of certain recurring "mechanisms" and "strategies" of political competition. Vanhanen identifies four general mechanisms: individual competition, cooperation, reciprocity, and aggression. He then discusses three related, more highly specialized strategies: the struggle for dominance and power, territorial behavior, and nepotism. Taken together, the mechanisms and strategies "function as links between the evolutionary roots of politics and contemporary political structures and behavior patterns" in the sense that they "canalize political behavior into certain regular patterns and constrain the variation of political structures" (pp. 31f).

I found Vanhanen's discussion of predispositions, mechanisms, and strategies to be interesting, though somewhat confusing. The conceptual distinction between mechanisms and strategies is unclear, as is the rationale for claiming that mechanisms are more general than strategies. I can easily see how the opposite might be argued. Moreover, Vanhanen on several occasions equates "strategies" with the "predispositions" that cause them (e.g., "Nepotism is another important evolved behavioural predisposition, which has a great