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Saturday, 10 April 2010

Mind the Gaps

Why the Government Should and Can Not Make Us Equal

By John Derbyshire

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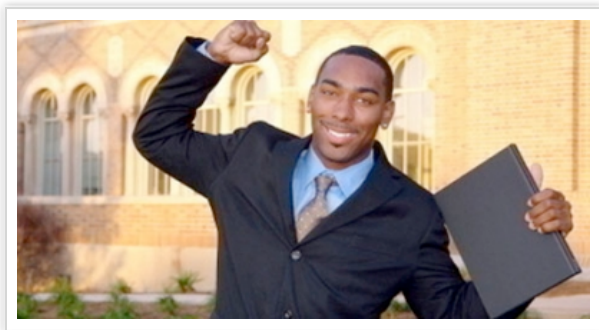
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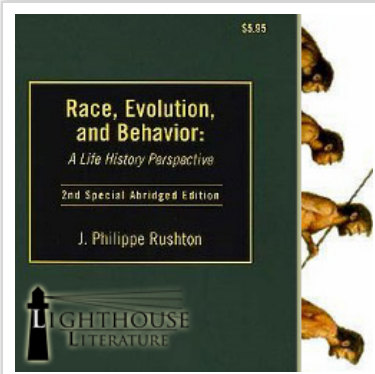


From [JohnDerbyshire.com](#)

These remarks were delivered at a panel discussion organized by the Black Law Students' Association (BLSA) of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, April 5, 2010. The official title of the event was "Revisiting Race and Remedies: Should the Government Play A Role in Eliminating Racial Disparities in Education and Employment?"

I am here this evening in the capacity of a wet blanket. I am here not to take one side or the other on the topic under debate, but to say that the topic, as written, is based on a false premise, and therefore has no satisfactory answer. I don't believe the disparities under discussion *can* be eliminated. Debate about whether government should play a greater or lesser role in eliminating them is therefore, in my opinion, otiose.

When the organizers first emailed me to suggest I appear on the panel, I told them that this is my view of the matter. I said that I was flattered to be invited to speak at such a prestigious institution, and that, having two teenage children, I am always glad to get out of the house for a few hours; but that racial disparities in education and employment have their origin in biological differences between the human races. Those differences are facts in the natural world, like the orbits of the planets. They can't be legislated out of existence; nor can they be "eliminated" by social or political action.



That there are natural, intractable differences between the human races seems apparent to me on both rational and empirical grounds.

First, the rational grounds. If a species is divided into separate populations, and those populations are left in reproductive isolation from each other for many generations, they will diverge. If you return after several hundred generations have passed, you will observe that the various traits that characterize individuals of the species are now distributed at different frequencies in the various populations. After a few *ten thousands* of generations, the divergence of the populations will be so great they can no longer cross-breed; and that is the origin of species. This is Biology 101.

Our species separated into two parts 50, 60, or 70 thousand years ago, depending on which paleoanthropologist you ask. One part remained in Africa, the ancestral homeland. The other crossed into Southwest Asia, then split, and re-split, and re-split, until there were human populations living in near-total reproductive isolation from each other in all parts of the world. This went on for hundreds of generations, causing the divergences we see today. Different physical types, as well as differences in behavior, intelligence, and personality, are exactly what one would expect to observe when scrutinizing these divergent populations.

Now, the empirical grounds. We all notice the different physical specialties of the different races in the Olympic Games. There was a run of, I think, seven Olympics in which every one of the finalists in the men's 100 meters sprint was of West African ancestry — 56 out of 56 finalists. You get less pronounced but similar patterns in other sports — East African distance runners, Northeast Asian divers, and so on. These differences even show up *within* sports, where a team sport calls for highly differentiated abilities in team members — football being the obvious example.

We see the same differences in traits that we don't think of as directly physical, what evolutionary psychologists sometimes refer to as the "BIP" traits — behavior, intelligence, and personality. Two of the hardest-to-ignore manifestations here are the extraordinary differentials in criminality between white Americans and African Americans, and the persistent gaps in scores when tests of cognitive ability are given to large population samples.

There is a huge academic literature on the gaps in cognitive test results, practically all of it converging on the fact that African American mean scores on cognitive tests fall below the white means by a tad more than one white standard deviation. There is in fact so much data on this now that we have meta-studies — studies of the studies: the one best-known to me is the meta-study by Roth *et al.* in 2001, which covered 39 studies involving nearly six million test-takers. That one standard deviation on cognitive testing has been so persistent across so many decades, a friend of mine, an academic sociologist, calls it "the universal constant of American sociology" — it's like the speed of light in physics.

To see whether that universal constant appears in the study of law, I looked up [the LSAC database](#) before coming here tonight. LSAC — the Law School Admission Council — publishes splendid statistical tables on the results of the LSAT exam, broken out by sex, region, race, and so on. The last figures I could find were for 2007-08. In that year, 117,530 students took the LSAT at least once. Of these persons, 69,792 identified themselves as "Caucasian." Their mean score was 152.56, standard deviation 8.96. In that same year, 12,152 test-takers identified themselves as "African American"; their mean score was 142.15, standard deviation 8.40. That's a difference between the means of 10.41 points, which is 1.16 times the white standard deviation. So perhaps my sociologist friend is on to something.

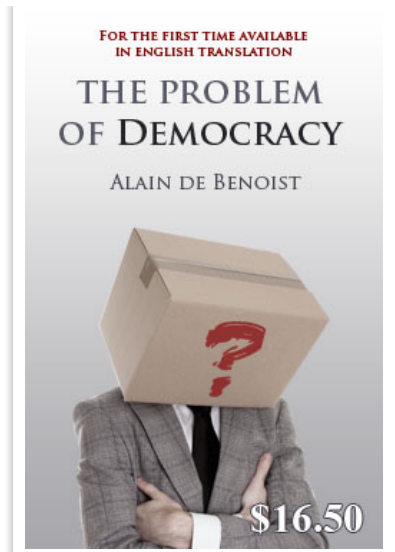
Should you want to say at this point that these so-called tests of so-called cognitive ability measure nothing important, you had better go and argue with the authorities here at the University of Pennsylvania law school. They have carefully recorded, and [posted on the internet](#), that half their student intake, second and third quartiles, falls between LSAT scores 166 and 171.**

Thus there are both rational and empirical grounds for believing in intractable group differences between the big old inbred paleolithic populations of *Homo sapiens*. In the context of this discussion, there are two things that need saying about these differences.

First, the differences are statistical. Any population contains variation. Variation within a population is the essence of biology. Those of you familiar with Charles Darwin's great classic *On the Origin of Species* will recall that three of the first five chapters have the word "variation" in the chapter title. Any population will contain individuals who are fat, thin, fast, slow, tall, short, and so on.

And in the grand biological scheme of things, human population divergences are slight, the populations overlapping massively on most kinds of traits. To go back to that "universal constant of sociology," for instance: Given a one standard deviation gap between black and white means, one thing we can deduce from pure mathematics is that around six million African Americans score higher on cognitive tests than the average white test-taker. In LSAT terms, over 1,300 African American test-takers in 2007-2008 scored above the white mean.

Second, the differences are abstract. Group differences are *statistical* truths. They exist in an abstract realm quite far removed from our everyday personal experience. They tell you nothing about the person you just met.



Group differences are, for example, one degree more abstract than *individual* differences. We all acknowledge individual differences all the time: she's fat, he's thin, she's shy, he's outgoing, she's smart, he's dumb.

We are all, to various degrees, aware of our own individual strengths and limitations. Certainly I am aware of mine. For example: My wife is a keen ballroom dancer. Because I love my wife, I did my best to become a ballroom dancer myself. For two years — two blessed years, ladies and gentlemen — I went along twice a week with her to the local Arthur Murray studio **to take instruction**. At the end of it, I still had two left feet. The instruction I received was like water poured on to a sheet of glass.

Even at the things we are good at, most of us are not very good. I make my living by writing; yet I can name, in my own small personal acquaintance, a dozen people who are better writers than I am. That's not *even* to mention the Shakespeares and Tolstoys. Most of us are hopeless at most things, and mediocre at the rest.

And yet — look! We don't lose sleep over this. We don't sink into rage and frustration at our own individual differences, or agitate for politicians to put balm on our psychic wounds. We accept our individual shortcomings with remarkable equanimity, playing the cards we've been dealt as best we can. That is the attitude of a healthy human being. To do otherwise would, most of us I'm sure would agree, be *un*-healthy. How much more unhealthy, then, to fret and rage and agitate about mere statistical abstractions?

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rosa 1 year ago

I wonder which how the audience responded to this speech.



steve burton 1 year ago

Derbyshire described the event and the reception of his talk in a post at The Corner:

"The main entertainment at the event was provided by the moderator, who plainly had no conception of what the word 'moderator' means. She opened with a long harangue against Amy's book, and further interposed her own views, at great gassy length, during the rest of the proceedings...

"Amy, a brilliant and witty lady who is also what I think the French call *une femme formidable*, defended her book very vigorously. Prof. Higginbotham offered a string of anecdotes to prove that racial discrimination is still going strong in the U.S.A. Prof. Darity argued we should solve the education gap by something called 'de-tracking,' which seems to mean putting under-performing kids in AP classes where, their self-esteem boosted just by being in the class, they will stop under-performing. To close the employment gap he demanded 'a federally guaranteed job for everyone.' I have not made that up.

"My...address...was followed by a sort of stunned silence, into which Madame Moderator interjected the remark that 'Mr. Derbyshire is here as a private guest of Prof. Wax, not at the invitation of the BLSA.' This was not true. BLSA invited me, and I have the email trail to prove it. To his credit, David Williams, the BLSA officer who'd invited me, came up afterwards and apologized for the immoderate demeanor of our

'moderator.'

"Audience questions were...carefully selected by Madame Moderator to put Amy on the spot — a thing none of them succeeded in doing, as the lady is very well able to take care of herself.

"Mingling for refreshments afterwards, I found the BLSA students a friendly bunch. The only rancor was from some older guy, either a mature student or an academic, who said that my ideas were 'old' and my remarks 'hurtful.' Apparently he thought that one or other, or both, of these observations invalidated the truth content of what I had said. Everyone else was either pleasant, or just ignored me."

4 people liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



rosa 12 months ago in reply to steve burton

Thank you to post the speech "aftermath"

[Like](#) [Reply](#)



John Taldone 1 year ago

You have to admire John Derbyshire for his courage. There are few public figures who possess the intellect and fearlessness to express such powerfully taboo opinions with such candor.

2 people liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Aaron 1 year ago

Kudos to Mr. Derbyshire for giving this talk. It's great that someone has both the will and the opportunity to speak publicly about this topic out in the real world. Also - I mean this sincerely, not sarcastically - credit goes to National Review for not firing him for speaking about this stuff.

3 people liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



dantes342 1 year ago

Sorry, but I take the work of actual scientists who aver again and again that there is no qualitative genetic difference between the races a little more seriously than Derbyshire's nonsense. Derbyshire, like so many hucksters and apologists for racism before him, leans on simpleminded misinterpretations of science and statistics to prove his 'point'. Not only that, but I'm curious as to how he would quantify something like 'intelligence'?

What does he mean, the intelligence that it takes to learn how to game standardized tests or to take advantage of being born into an upper-middle class family who can pay an Ivy League tuition? This man doesn't seem to have any real idea of what he's talking about. I'm actually happy that he spoke before an audience of Black students so they get a good long look at what passes for a "Conservative Intellectual" and realize that it's the same old crap, only with a few new flies buzzing around it.

1 person liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Rob S. 1 year ago in reply to dantes342

The ability to 'game' an intelligence test really relies almost completely on one factor: intelligence. That's why intelligence tests work.

The commonsense notion of intelligence is valid. IQ results correlate with job performance, and with the ability to master a body of difficult knowledge. What IQ tests measure is a good deal more objective than subjective. Scientists who make great advances score higher on IQ tests than the average scientist. And relatively hard and relatively easy items on an IQ test are found hard and easy by all kinds of different people. Therefore hard questions on a test are hard, and easy questions easy - objectively. Races don't differ with respect to which items they find hard or easy.

People who have the SATs and GPA to attend Harvard (or the like), but attend state colleges instead, wind up with the same income as the people who actually attended Harvard. So it doesn't look like attending Harvard will add much to your intelligence or performance. It's being *able* to attend Harvard, if you wanted to, that correlates with intelligence - not the fact of having actually attended.

But obviously intelligence isn't all that matters. To an approximation, achievement equals IQ times "conscientiousness" (discipline). Of course, "achievement" isn't all that matters either.

I'm told there are people out there, who actually understand superstring theory themselves, and believe that any human being could understand it with enough effort. These people are completely

nuts. If you are one of them, I probably lack anywhere near enough intelligence to bring to bear arguments that could convince you to change your mind.

2 people liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



brandonm 12 months ago in reply to Rob S.

If I may be so bold, the crux of Mr. Derbyirrevelenttoanythingresemblingseriousociologicaldiscussiononthematterintelligenceshire's position. Is that he ignores our world is entirely nurture over nature.

create all black school with well to do families divorced fro mteh common problems of "the hood" you are so referring to throughout this thread and his speech.. Then insert a few "normal" caucasians and well perhaps well see some Intellectual INFERIORITY going on there....paleface-ratnosed conniving little guttersnipes looking to ruin our good school but I digress.

all this talk of tests, without any admission, that there's moer tadmit about the underlying data than is comfortable for mister debershire

1 person liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Donald 12 months ago in reply to brandonm

Really? So why can't a baboon or a dog be just as smart as a human? You say nature has nothing to do with it. If you accept differences between species, then you have to accept the premise that, at least, nature MAY have something to say about racial differences.

create all black school with well to do families divorced fro mteh common problems of "the hood"

Okay, we'll wait for you to do this. I wont be holding my breath though. Hehe.

1 person liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Karl Ketzer 12 months ago in reply to Donald

FACT: White/Negro I.Q. differences are constantly excused as results of environmental variations, but at least five studies that have attempted to equate socio-economic backgrounds of the two races indicate no significant change in relative results. As environment improves, the Negro IQ improves but so does the White. The gap is not decreased.* In fact, extensive research by DR. G.J. McGurk, associate Professor of Psychology at Villanove University, reveals that the gap in intelligence between Blacks and Whites INCREASES where socio-economic levels of both races are raised to the middle classes.**

FACT: Even when Blacks and Whites have the same backgrounds,in terms of family income and childhood advantages, Blacks still have average I.Q. scores 12 to 15 points lower than comparable Whites. This includes cases where Black children have been adopted by White parents. Their I.Q.s may be improved by environment, but they are still closer to their biological parents than their adoptive parents.***

* Shuey, Audrey H., The Testing of Negro Intelligence, Social SciencePress, New York, 1966

** McGurk, Frank, "A Scientist's Report on Race Differences."U.S. News and World Report, Sept. 21, 1956. Washington, D.C.

*** American Renaissance, Dec. '90, Box 2504, Menlo Park, CA 94026; Jensen, Arthur R. Bias in Mental Testing, The Free Press, New York, 1980; American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 92, pg 822.

Cited in "Whites & Blacks 100 FACTS (and one Lie)" by Roger Roots.

Suggested further reading: Race Differences in Intelligence: An Evolutionary Analysis by Richard Lynn, Professor of Psychology (Ulster), Washington Summit Publisher, Augusta, GA, 2006.

--Karl Ketzer

1 person liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



bruce stewart 12 months ago in reply to Karl Ketzer

Of course Karl, you site Jensen and the same race crowd whose studies have been called into question over and over. How about something a little more current? 1956? C'mon.

I'll check out richard lynn's book, but this notion of racial iq differences is still curious to me because i don't understand the point you, derbyshire, and the rest of the white racial realists are trying to make. Please explain.

b

Like Reply



Guest 12 months ago in reply to bruce stewart

"rest of the white racial realists are trying to make."

B,

The idea is that some of those 'average racial disparities' people commonly talk about have a partial genetic etiology. Here are two discussions: <http://www.udel.edu/educ/gottf...> and: <http://www.udel.edu/educ/gottf...>

Beyond that there is the issue of what this means. At very least this would mean not attributing everything to 'racism.' Derb seems to imply this means nothing can be done. Others would use this as a call for more research and more social action.

That's a separate point.

Like Reply



Botti 12 months ago in reply to bruce stewart

How about something a little more current? 1956? C'mon.

Try (2009).

June 2005 issue of Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, Vol. 11, No. 2.

www.udel.edu/educ/gottfredson/... -

(2009) Whole-brain size and general mental ability: A review. International Journal of Neuroscience, 119, 691-731.

<http://psychology.uwo.ca/facul...>

2001 Meta-analytic review by Roth et al which yielded a 1.1 SD B-W IQ difference for a total of 6,246,729 testees from corporate, military, and higher education samples. That difference was consistent for college and university application tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT; N = 2.4 million) and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE; N = 2.3 million), as well as for tests of job applicants in corporate settings (N = 0.5 million) and in the military (N = 0.4 million).

Roth PL, Bevier CA, Bobko P, Switzer III FS, Tyler P. Ethnic group differences in cognitive ability in employment and educational settings: a meta-analysis. Pers Psychol 2001; 54: 297-330.

Like Reply



Botti 12 months ago in reply to bruce stewart

How about something a little more current? 1956? C'mon.

In addition to the references below, I'd also recommend Jason Malloy's essay at Gene Expression.

<http://www.gnxp.com/blog/2007/...>

Like Reply



steve burton 12 months ago in reply to dantes342

Pathetic.

Again: what, exactly, did Derbyshire say that wasn't true?

Quotes, please?

Numbers, please?

No more B.S., please?

Like Reply



Karl Ketzer 12 months ago in reply to dantes342

[i]Sorry, but I take the work of actual scientists who aver again and again that there is no qualitative genetic difference between the races a little more seriously than Derbyshire's nonsense.[/i]

Which scientist makes the claim that there is "no qualitative genetic difference between the races"?

How do you explain the fact that the world-class sprinters are almost all of people of West African ancestry? That world-class distance runners tend to come from East Africa? Quick, without using google, name a white running back in the NFL, or wide receiver, or corner back. 78% of professional basketball players in the US are black, which in America almost always means "of West African ancestry." Do you think that genetic differences play *any* part in this?

To the blank slate lefties steeped in Boas, Gould, Kamin, Lewontin, faith dictates facts. It's all just one big coincidence, eh? Genetics has nothing to do with the answers to these questions, that everyone is born a tabula rosa, that "we're all the same."

Did you see this article the other day in Science magazine? "Japanese Guts Are Made for Sushi" <http://news.sciencemag.org/sci...> The article describes a new study "which finds that Japanese people harbor enzymes in their intestinal bacteria that help them digest seaweed--enzymes that North Americans lack."

DNA differences among different branches of the human species as a result of having evolved over the course of thousands and tens of thousands of years in different geographies to adapt to survival challenges?

Why I'm just shocked that anyone would be such a racist hateful hater who hates even to suggest such a thing.

DNAPrint Genomics has developed a test called "DNAWitness," a product that uses Ancestry Informative Markers for a forensic purpose. By using the same ancestry tests on DNA evidence from crime scenes, DNAPrint Genomics can help narrow down suspects based on race. See "The Inconvenient Science of Racial DNA Profiling" in Wired, 10/5/07. Hint: if you can look at something under a microscope, it isn't a "social construct."

You might want to read Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sport, and Why We're Afraid to Talk About It by John Entine.

Like Reply



Botti 12 months ago in reply to dantes342

Sorry, but I take the work of actual scientists who aver again and again that there is no qualitative genetic difference between the races a little more seriously than Derbyshire's nonsense.

Citation? As noted above, brains and bodies have continued to change over the past 50,000 years. Hence, forensic anthropologists can identify race from the skull or skeleton. <http://www.ln.edu.hk/philoso/s...>

In terms of genes we know now there are enough genetic differences between people from different parts of the world that you can classify people in groups that correspond to popular notions of race. See studies by Rosenberg, or Neil Risch & Hua Tang:

"we found that individuals could be partitioned into six main genetic clusters, five of which corresponded to Africa, Europe and the part of Asia south and west of the Himalayas, East Asia, Oceania, and the Americas"

<http://www.plosgenetics.org/ar...>

Because groups cluster differently, they also exhibit different frequency distributions over various genes, leading to group differences. As Steve Hsu notes:

“What seems to be true (from preliminary studies) is that the gene variants that were under strong selection (reached fixation) over the last 10k years are different in different clusters. That is, the way that modern people in each cluster differ, due to natural selection, from their own ancestors 10k years ago is not the same in each cluster — we have been, at least at the genetic level, experiencing divergent evolution.

In fact, recent research suggests that 7% or more of all our genes are mutant versions that replaced earlier variants through natural selection over the last tens of thousands of years. There was little gene flow between continental clusters (“races”) during that period, so there is circumstantial evidence for group differences beyond the already established ones (superficial appearance, disease resistance).”

<http://infoproc.blogspot.com/2...>

Also, see further discussion here by Hsu.

<http://infoproc.blogspot.com/2...>

Also, as recent findings show accelerated genetic change over the past 10,000 years, some of which relates to brain function, there is little reason to expect uniform distribution of traits.

See University of Virginia Psychologist, Jonathan Haidt’s comment on this research ‘FASTER EVOLUTION MEANS MORE ETHNIC DIFFERENCES’.

http://www.edge.org/q2009/q09_...

A fair fraction of the recent changes are neurological and likely to affect behavior in some way. For example, you see new versions of SLC6A4, a serotonin transporter, in Europeans and Asians. There’s a new version of a gene (DAB1) that shapes the development of the layers of the cerebral cortex in east Asia.

<http://www.plosgenetics.org/ar...>

<http://biology.plosjournals.or...>

Like Reply



dantes342 1 year ago

When I referenced gaming tests, I didn’t say ‘intelligence’ tests -- but standardized tests. And when it comes to intelligence tests, which I don’t see how anyone could game by the way, there’s the issue of what kind of intelligence is being tested -- or even recognized -- and what the cultural context of the testing is.

As far as attending Harvard et al making you smarter or more capable, that’s not my point: As you say, intelligence in and of itself has never been the only -- or even the primary way to achieve success, or more to the heart of what Derbyshire seems to really be getting at, for Whites to maintain societal dominance. Everyone here knows there are countless legacy C students who’ve gone to Ivy League schools purely because of their station and from there on to run companies and our lives...how does that jibe with the notion of the kind of intelligence-based meritocracy that Derbyshire implies?

It’s easy to insist, as Derbyshire basically does, that European Whites are more intelligent and therefore on top because they’re just genetically predetermined to be so. They happen to benefit in our time from a set of societal circumstances that favor them in many ways.

And no, I don’t think just anyone can understand superstring theory. But if someone is actually going to sit there and say that there aren’t as many minorities as Whites who could understand it all else being equal (which, again, is not the case), then I’m going to respectfully disagree.

1 person liked this. Like Reply



Donald 12 months ago in reply to dantes342

So why do East Asians outperform whites on tests of intelligence (or proxies thereof)? How does that fit into your drab theory of institutional white racism? Why are they overrepresented in universities and especially so in grad studies?

Seriously, this boilerplate leftist diatribe on IQ and race issues grows old.

And no, I don't think just anyone can understand superstring theory. But if someone is actually going to sit there and say that there aren't as many minorities as Whites who could understand it all else being equal (which, again, is not the case), then I'm going to respectfully disagree.

Laugh.

Like Reply



disgusted 12 months ago in reply to Donald

maybe because asians weren't enslaved by white americans. just a thought!

1 person liked this. Like Reply

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John Derbyshire

[John Derbyshire](#) is a contributing editor at *National Review*. He lives with his wife and children on Long Island.

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