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Editor: Gene V Glass,Glass@ASU.EDU. College of Education,
Arizona State University,Tempe AZ 85287-2411

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Race, Intelligence and Ideology: A Review Essay of *The Bell Curve*

John C. Culbertson
University of Kansas
jculb@falcon.cc.ukans.edu

Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray. *The Bell Curve: Class Structure and the Future of America.* New York: The Free Press. 1994. $30.00

Occasionally a book out of academia will break from scholarly circles and enter into the mainstream market. On even rarer occasions, it will gain considerable notoriety before its initial publication. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* is such a book. Currently, it has entered the New York Times best-sellers list and appeared in most academic and mainstream periodical book reviews. Direct publicity for the book has also been strong. Although Herrnstein died September 24 of the past year, Murray has appeared on many popular television and radio talk shows.

Since so much has already been written and said about this book, it would seem redundant to give merely a brief review of the work. Ironically, with so much being said about its content and implications, very little depth has been offered regarding the fundamental presuppositions and implications that the study entails.

When examining the findings of Herrnstein and Murray, an obvious question arises: What are the scientific merits of their discoveries? From this question, two elements will be analyzed in this essay: (1) the notion of race as a legitimate category; and (2) intelligence as an understandable phenomenon. If the scientific status of these elements is clearly discreditable, another question arises: What is the ideological purpose of such a study? As a conclusion, I will offer some final thoughts relevant to the book as a whole.

It should be understood that the entire book is not dedicated to ethnicity and intelligence.

The latter half of the book addresses this notion, but the first half outlines the basis of an emerging cognitive elite among white America and how that has contributed to the separation of the cognitive classes. The last two chapters (around 20 pages) set the ideology to solving the problems that are recognized in the study.

It is also interesting how Herrnstein and Murray respond to criticism of incoherence and contradictions of their work. On recent radio and television talk shows Murray has stated that it is unimportant if the cause of lower IQ's originates from cultural suppression or genetic endowment. This logically tautological stance undermines the fundamental question at hand, but at the same time (unintentionally?) exposes the main ideological purposes of the book. It should also be noted that Herrnstein and Murray seem to acknowledge their particular ideological scheme and state many times in the book that their conjectures (and even scientific evidence) are not written in stone.

With 552 pages of text, 110 pages of appendices, 168 pages of notes and a 57 page bibliography, *The Bell Curve* does not make for leisurely reading, as one might have expected from its popularity. But, even with its length, the book is well written and appropriately organized, with one appendix completely dedicated to those who do not thoroughly understand the sophistication of statistical measurement (entitled Statistics for People Who Are Sure They Cant Learn Statistics). The grammatical style of the book also suggests that Herrnstein and Murray had the mainstream market in mind; sentences are short and simple.

Race, Intelligence and Ideology

The category of racial separation has a peculiar history. The ancient Athenians considered anyone who could not speak Greek an inferior barbarian. Even the advanced civilizations found in Egypt and Persia were thought of as inferior for their lack of Greek ideals, education and culture. Similar conjectures were fabricated by the Romans regarding the Goths, Vandals and Huns. During the 18th and early 19th century, it was common for Europeans to refer to racial disunion in relation to geographic locality, (e.g., British race, French race, etc). Over 100 years ago the "Chinaman" was described by Westerners as an inferior race (Clairmonte, 1970). Arthur de Gobineau published The Inequality of Human Races in 1853, which asserted that the Aryan race is the derivative of civilized man and the purity of the race can only be preserved if the blood of Aryans is maintained. Similar notions were expressed by Houston Chamberlain of Germany in the 1913 work, Foundations of the Nineteenth Century. The measurement of intelligence has also had a peculiar history ranging from the number of bumps on the head to the volume of the cranium (Gould, 1981).

Ideas like these are clearly devoid of any scientific value, and most people today give them very little consideration. But even with this understanding, the notion of race is still conventionally recognized as a legitimate category. In their hypothesis of differentiating innate structures in intelligence as represented by race, Murray and Herrnstein propose a stance similar to the speculations expressed above, but now such statements are supported through the justification of "scientific proof." Given the polemic nature of such a study and its purported findings, the responses to the work have been mixed. Some condemn Murray and Herrnstein for being blatant racists with no regard for the legitimate canons of scientific method. Others have criticized the conclusions, but support such research in the name of academic freedom. With the prominence that scientific inquiry holds in this age, a thorough investigation into the scientific merit of *The Bell Curve* is in order. A clear place to begin is with the category of race and the phenomenon of intelligence itself. What has been scientifically demonstrated or even plausibly argued in this respect?

Herrnstein and Murray do not consistently use the term "race." Due to its pejorative connotations they intermittently employ the word "ethnicity." Likewise, the phenomenon of

intelligence carries with it "undue affect and political baggage" (p. 22). Subsequently, "we shall employ the more neutral term cognitive ability" (p. 22). With little supporting argument, they declare that the category of ethnicity is legitimate and valid. It is appropriate, by the fact that, clearly, "There are differences between races, and they [the differences] are the rule, not the exception" (p. 272). Put simply, "Races are by definition groups of people who differ in characteristic ways" (p. 272). They also state, that "The rule we follow here is to classify people according to the way they classify themselves" (p. 271).

Regarding the nature of cognitive ability, "we will be drawing heavily from the classical tradition" (p. 19). The classicists "seek to identify the components of intelligence much as physicists seek to identify the structure of the atom" (p. 14).

> The classicists are for practical purposes unanimous in accepting that G [general factor of intelligence] sit at the center of the structure in a dominating position-not just as an artifact of statistical manipulation but as an expression of a core human mental ability. (p. 14)

The notion of G was invented by Charles Spearman, a British Army officer and statistician whose research was conducted during the early part of this century (Spearman, 1904). A fundamental conclusion regarding the classical tradition claims that, "All standardized tests of academic aptitude or achievement measure this general factor to some degree, but IQ tests expressly designed for that purpose measure it more accurately" (p. 22). Questions regarding cognitive ability in relation to ethnic differences are justified because, basically "race is on peoples minds when they think about IQ" (p. 272), regardless of what the "intellectual elite" purport (pp. 11-13).

> Intellectual fashion has dictated that all differences [in intelligence] must be denied except the absolutely undeniable differences in appearance, but nothing in biology says this should be so. (p. 272)

Furthermore, "We are worried that the elite wisdom on this issue, for years almost hysterically in denial about that possibility [the genetic factor], will snap too far in the other direction" (p. 315). It is a fact, Herrnstein and Murray assert, that, "IQ is substantially heritable" (p. 105). They claim that it is also certain that "Races differ not just in average IQ scores but in the profile of intellectual capacities, (as represented by the aggregate of many sub-tests)" (p. 299). There are several factors that support this notion even though it is not going to be learned "tomorrow that all the cognitive differences between races are 100 percent genetic in origin" (p. 315).

Social problems are thus prevalent among people who have low cognitive abilities. Poverty, school dropout, unemployment, crime, welfare, illegitimacy, single-parent families, low birth- weight babies and deprived home environments are inevitable consequences of a growing lower cognitive class (pp. 369-386 & 523-526). Solutions to crime and welfare "must be judged by their effectiveness with the people most likely to exhibit the problem: The least intelligent people" (p. 386).

From this loosely knit rationale, Herrnstein and Murray conclude that members of the "cognitive elite class, who measure in the top percentiles of cognitive ability, are thus becoming increasingly isolated" and "a deteriorating quality of life for people at the bottom end of the cognitive ability distribution has occurred over the better portion of this century" (p. 50). "How should policy deal with the twin realities that people differ in intelligence for reasons that are not their fault, and that intelligence has a powerful bearing on how well people do in life?" (p. 527).

Declarations of the kind expressed above fall into two general types. The first deal with what has been discovered concerning the scientific legitimacy of the category of race. The second address the phenomenon of intelligence and the possibility of both measuring it validly and of

relating it to race. Within both of these types of assertions, the expected social results (i.e., the social ills caused by a growing ethnic group of low cognitive ability) are also addressed, along with an ideology for solutions to these problems.

The Category of Race

Clearly, statements of the first kind can be judged by scientific evidence or rational arguments. Murray and Herrnstein, however, offer no evidence and only an unclear rationale for employing the category. Without justification they dogmatically adopt the category along with its dubious history outlined above. Furthermore, as it will become clear with more specific illustrations, any attempt to unpack the concept of racial distinction turns into incoherence and equivocation.

The specific claim of dividing people up by physical characteristics is utterly ambiguous. Are Herrnstein and Murray saying that the pigmentation of skin and facial structure are clear and distinct demarcations? If this is the case, then their "rule" can be rejected on the grounds of pure dogmatism. As geneticists have consistently demonstrated, there are no significant differences between the gene pools of "races" as we currently define them. To say that there is one sub-species or group that is more "intelligent" than another based merely on the phenotype simply does not make sense in the light of the current theories (Raven and Johnson, 1988). In fact, a greater variation in the genotype occurs between individuals of the same race (e.g., Europeans) than between the people of differing races (e.g., European "white" and "African black").

There simply are no solid theories, or consistent arguments regarding the legitimacy of the category of race in connection with intelligence. It seems absurd to base an entire study on a phenomenon that is empty of theory and argument. Perhaps Herrnstein and Murray are suggesting that skin pigmentation and facial structure are such obvious characterizations that they cannot be overlooked. If so, then other attributes cannot be overlooked either, such as height and intelligence, eye color and intelligence, weight and intelligence, and virtually every other trivial way we can classify by physical characteristics. No one would take seriously a study that proposed a causal correlation between eye color and intelligence, but people do take race and intelligence seriously, because we unfortunately live in a society that heavily discriminates against race.

If the rationales that Herrnstein and Murray offer are scientifically pretentious, they are also disingenuous in their assertion that they are dividing people up as people wish to be divided up. This notion also is devoid of any scientific or argumentative merit. Arguing that a notion is valid because the majority of the people believe it is plainly fallacious. People are divided up the way they are because they are required to fill in a questionnaire that asks for "race" or "ethnicity," and which lists the classifications from which to choose.

Herrnstein and Murray concede that they focus "on three major racial-ethnic groupings--whites, East Asians, and blacks-- because they have dominated both the research and contentions regarding intelligence" (p. 275). But for their argument to have any merit, they must show that there is a scientific basis for the classification as represented by the authorities in the field. Surely they are not contending that psychometricians are authorities in genetic biology.

Herrnstein and Murray are completely unclear with statements like, "race differences are varied and complex, and they make the human species more adaptable and more interesting" (p. 272), and then state that, "Jews--specifically, Ashkenazi Jews of European origins--test higher than any other ethnic group" (p.275). This sounds very much like the voice of 18th and 19th century racism, dividing people up according to geographic location. Are Herrnstein and Murray claiming that Ashkenazi Jews of European origin are a clear and distinct race, separate from other Jewish people? Specificity of this nature can easily be reduced to nonsense, (e.g., Might not

Italians--specifically, Brooklyn Italians of New York origin--test higher than any other ethnic group?) Surely, with the statements above, Herrnstein and Murray are referring to the varied cultural differences that make the human species more interesting, not the fact that one group of people has more or less melanin than the other. But such comments are so vague that it is unclear if their assertions about ethnicity and intelligence amount to anything at all.

Consider, for example, their admission that "the differences [in cognitive ability] among individuals are far greater than the differences between groups" (p. 271). This is true whether or not ethnicity is treated as a category. As Herrnstein and Murray point out, in largely homogenous societies, there are still differences in cognitive abilities. Those differences could, with a certain degree of validity, randomly correlate with some other arbitrary physical characteristic. Furthermore, the average IQ of people within a certain ethnic category is logically unrelated to the contingencies of a particular individual. So the question remains: Why the category of race?

To try and hedge this answer, as Herrnstein and Murray do, is unworthy. A distinct element in our empirical understanding of the world involves dividing phenomena into categories. Since different cultures and groups of people see the world differently, and subsequently, divide the world into different categories, the question of methodological objectivity arises in relation to the category of race or anything else. Many of these divisions and the language employed rest on the engraved conventions of the past as is the case with race, and it is unlikely that they will change quickly (this seems to be where Herrnstein and Murray find their justification). The notion seems to be an historical malady to be overcome in the same way slavery was eliminated. Much has been written on this topic in feminist epistemology in attempts to understand the bias of one's conceptual scheme with respect to objectivity in scientific understanding (Antony, 1993). I won't recount the argument here, but the consequences of the notion of race are sadly unjust and closely related to what feminist epistemology is addressing.

We are constantly bombarded with applications of the category of race without justification or rationale, especially in studies of crime and anti-social behavior (another main theme of *The Bell Curve*). Even if one accepts the position presented in this book (i.e., that certain ethnic groups are not as intelligent as others), Herrnstein and Murray concede that "the increase in crime over the last thirty years (like the increase in illegitimacy and welfare) cannot be attributed to changes in intelligence but rather must be blamed on other factors" (p. 251).

In the news we find lead stories like, "Two black youths were arrested today..." or "An Hispanic was charged with murder in the slaying of a white youth." Not only are these depictions unfair to the entire group of blacks or Hispanics, who are undeservedly associated with the one individual committing the crime, but they are also unfair to the other ethnic groups. Used in that way, race becomes a way to tell the criminals from the victims. As has been widely reported, many Caucasians feel unsafe in the presence of a black or Hispanic man. Is this caused by some genetic ethnophobia? Surely not, especially since very young children often pay no attention at all to race. We live in a culture that presupposes race as a legitimate category producing social consequences that are plainly unfair. This is even more evident when it includes the notion of inferiority.

The presuppositions in *The Bell Curve* remind us that America is a racially separated nation, with the major distinction being drawn between European-Americans and African-Americans. Herrnstein and Murray are correct when they say, "the politics of cognitive inequality get hotter--sometimes too hot to handle--when they are attached to the politics of ethnicity" (p. 271). As many are trying to come to grips with this country's history of oppression, we are constantly reminded that the scientifically empty category of race is still one of the most prominent forces in the country.

The Phenomenon of Intelligence

The phenomenon of intelligence, like the category of race, is an equally obscure amalgam of complex properties, which dissolves into triviality and incoherence under examination. The tests used as tools for predictor values fail at most levels, except perhaps at measuring the ability to take tests well. Admittedly, Herrnstein and Murray state that measuring intelligence is a troublesome task, but one that has produced a great amount of knowledge regarding the phenomenon. "The individual's IQ score all by itself is a useful tool but a limited one" (p. 19).

As for their claim that the "classicist" psychometricians are similar to physicists in their approach, this seems greatly to broaden the scope of what scientific methodology entails.

> With regards to the radicals and the theory of multiple intelligences, we share some common ground. Socially significant individual differences induce a wide range of human talents that do not fit within the classical conception of intelligence. (p. 20)

"When properly administered the tests are not measurably biased against socioeconomic, ethnic, or racial subgroups. They predict a wide variety of socially acceptable important outcomes" (p. 15). For Herrnstein and Murray to take a socially derived definition of intelligence and make mostly biological statements about behavior is just as misleading as their approach to ethnicity. Clearly a socially derived concept can be a universal generality, but not necessarily a product of genetic structure.

In some instances, Hernnstein and Murray base their argument not on the weight of evidence in favor of it, but on what they claim is the absence of evidence against it--as though the failure to disprove the existence of unicorns establishes their existence. But the current failure to refute radical genetic determinism does not mean that it is necessarily true. The same holds for their use on the concept of G, general intelligence, on which their whole argument rests heavily. In the 845 page book, fewer than 50 pages are dedicated to G, and of those pages, only a few attempt to establish its existence. "From the classical traditions that are by now beyond significant technical dispute, there is such a thing as a general factor of cognitive ability on which human beings differ" (p. 22). The fallacy here is that the "experts" used to justify the notion of G are the same scholars who support the classical tradition. Hernnstein and Murray's reliance on G lacks rational justification and their affinity for it has more to do with legitimizing their conclusions than the conclusions being legitimized by the evidence.

"High cognitive ability as of the 1990s means, more than ever before, that the chances of success in life are good and getting better all the time, and these are decreasingly affected by the social environment, which by extension indicates that they must be increasingly affected by genes" (pp. 109-110). This is a rather simplistic analysis, and as mentioned above, to be reductive with the phenomena of intelligence, behavior and its possible biological implications is simply fallacious.

Herrnstein and Murray's initial approach to intelligence is also odd. Usually, physicists start with an accepted working hypothesis that explains some phenomenon. An accepted hypothetical/theoretical base explaining the structures of what intelligence is has not been provided. IQ is arbitrarily defined by IQ tests, which were designed by compiling what the test makers think intelligent people are likely to know.

Herrnstein and Murray concede this problem and give an excellent example of the built-in bias that IQ tests entail. This particular example was taken from the verbal analogy portion of the SAT (p. 281).

> RUNNER:MARATHON
> (A) envoy:embassy
> (B) martyr:massacre
> (C) oarsman:regatta
> (D) referee:tournament

(E) horse:stable

As Herrnstein and Murray explain, "The answer is oarsman:regatta--fairly easy if you know what both a marathon and a regatta are, a matter of guess work otherwise. How would a black youngster from the inner city ever have heard of a regatta?" (p. 281). But the real question is: What do the psychometricians have on their mind when they create such tests and from what conceptual scheme are they deriving their questions?

Herrnstein and Murray go on to say that other more sophisticated tests have eliminated vocabulary bias (e.g., geometrical figures, etc.) and now measure reaction time and movement time, which give a more reliable figure to the G factor (p. 281-295). Again, this has been broken down according to ethnicity. Even with the limitations of test bias and the amendments to the new testing methods, there is widespread failure to note the unargued assumptions that go into the creation of these revised instruments. Without any solid theoretical framework, there are many inferences that one could make regarding the amount of time someone spends answering a question and the speed with which the hand moves to answer the question, not one of which would necessarily have anything to do with the phenomenon of intelligence or the category of race.

The point applies to all tests including those that utilize geometric figures instead of vocabulary. The conceptual framework from which the tests were created can never be completely purified of the single-minded bias of the creators. Many have written about this problem; but perhaps the most famous is Stephen Jay Gould. In his The Mismeasure of Man, he states succinctly that "determinist arguments for ranking people according to a single scale of intelligence, no matter how numerically sophisticated, have recorded little more than social prejudice (Gould, p. 27-28, 1981).

Usually, both laboratory and theoretical physicists are concerned about the consistent predictor value of the implementation of the methodology, but with the methodology employed in *The Bell Curve*, there are no such concerns. When we look for specific predictions, we find nothing, only vague conjectures and no obvious conclusions, which brings us right back where we started:

> The state of knowledge does not permit a precise estimate, but half a century of work, now amounting to hundreds of empirical and theoretical studies, permits a broad conclusion that the genetic component of IQ is unlikely to be smaller than 40 percent or higher than 80 percent. The most unambiguous direct estimates, based on identical twins raised apart produce some of the highest estimates of heritability. For purposes of this discussion, we will adopt a middling estimate of 60 percentheritability, which, by extension means that IQ is about 40 percent a matter of environment (p. 105).

Imagine an engineer who is building a bridge saying to the contractor, "Well, I can't give you an accurate estimate, but there is between a 40 to 80 percent chance that this bridge will not fall, so I will go with the mean and say 60." Clearly, the contractor would not be renewing any jobs with that engineer in the near future.

As to the actual source of this number and its calculation, Herrnstein and Murray are vague, they simply state that "nonspecialists need not concern themselves with the nuts and bolts" (p. 106). They then go on for merely three pages outlining both the direct and indirect procedures that psychometricians have implemented to derive it. This weakness in the methodology is acknowledged in their own examples.

> Suppose that the question at issue regards individuals: "Given two 11 year olds, one with an IQ of 110 and one with an IQ of 90, what can you tell us about the

differences between those two children?" The answer must be phrased very tentatively. On many important topics, the answer must be, We can tell you nothing with any confidence (p. 19).

From the execution of the scientific method, physicists do not discuss "crisis of belief" or "loss of confidence" in relation to their studies, but clearly psychometricians must have these notions to help explain their 40 to 80 percent calculation. Even with the imprecise number derived, Herrnstein and Murray go on and say that "luck continues to matter in life's outcomes, but now it is more a matter of the IQ handed out in life's lottery than anything else about the circumstances" (p. 109). But this notion is, as stated, without clear empirical support and left with no clear meaning or understanding.

The overall purpose for applying this methodology to human phenomena is also vague. In most cases, scientific methodology assumes that the result of some antecedent can be deduced from the testable knowledge of specific causes, and the knowledge of the antecedent can also be deduced from the knowledge of the results. Are Herrnstein and Murray implying that through statistical measurement, specific predictions can be made as to who people are, what they will do or what they will become? If this is the case, then their claim is easily dismissable. Even the most radical determinist would admit that, although all phenomena may be determined, there may be contingencies in human understanding that are not explainable or testable. By limiting the phenomenon of intelligence to the framework of the methodology presented in this study, it is virtually impossible thoroughly to study the relevant concepts of any human phenomena, much less to outline their structures or to discover any predictor value in them.

Even if one grants that the measurements taken in this study reach acceptable levels of reliability and validity, the correlation coefficients are not very high. The higher correlation of .68 with likelihood of having a child is for the high school sample of mothers living in poverty (sample taken from January 1, 1978 through December 31, 1987). The highest correlations are for consistency of test taking ability. The remaining correlations are so modest that they hardly establish any relationship whatsoever, much less a causal one. And yet Herrnstein and Murray insist that it is intelligence, and not socio-economic status with which it is correlated, that is primarily responsible for the group differences.

Ideology and Policy

Herrnstein and Murray's proclamations regarding America's social decline in relation to the cognitive classes fall into the range of borderline suspicion to full-blown paranoia. Much of the aggravation that has ensued from the publication of this study centers on the ideological framework advanced in relation to the social decline of American culture (approximately 20 pages).

When shaky scientific evidence is presented and cannot stand on its own merit, the advancement of an ideology usually follows (Chomsky 1972). The difficulty is to separate the validity and scientific status of *The Bell Curve* from its ideological element. Understandably, both the scientific evidence and the ideology are legitimate topics (Herrnstein was a professor of psychology at Harvard, and Murray is a professor of Political Science at Harvard), but it doesn't seem fitting for the overall topic and supposed purpose of this book. For example:

> Over the next decade, it will become broadly accepted by the cognitive elite that the people we now refer to as the underclass are in that condition through no fault of their own but because of inherent shortcomings about which little can be done...It will be agreed that the underclass cannot be trusted to use cash wisely. Therefore policy will consist of greater benefits, but these will be primarily in the form of

services rather than cash (p. 523).

What this has to do with the "scientific" measurement of intelligence is unknown. In a similar passage, they state:

> Membership in this new class, the cognitive elite, is gained by high IQ. But once in the club, usually by age eighteen, members will begin to share much else as well. Among other things, they will come to run much of the country's business. In the private sector, the cognitive elite dominates the ranks of CEO's and the top echelon of corporate executives (p. 510).

From these passages, and others similar to it, Herrnstein and Murray justify their findings through a particular ideology and agenda, which pretentiously defines the specific presuppositions (the category of race and intelligence) for writing this book. The intensity present in their writing suggests that they are more than merely dispassionate scientists in search of the truth and the advancement of their field. This is disturbing, especially when so many people will read the book and possibly hold it in high regard without examining its unsupported assumptions. From this point Herrnstein and Murray refer to the consequences that will bear on the fate of children, the new white underclass and the eventual custodial state, which will emerge from such isolation of the cognitive elite.

Another troubling point is that, for Herrnstein and Murray, absolute success--that is wealth and power--is determined by heredity as reflected by intelligence and social merit. But it is quite possible that wealth and power are attained by those who are devious and seek material gain without regard to principles of ethics or conscience, instead of by those who are intelligent or socially gifted. It would be interesting to devise tests of honesty and integrity and to administer them to leaders in business and politics.

In the same way, Herrnstein and Murray are wrong if they believe that the cognitive elite only define success as the attainnent of wealth, prestige and power. Many of the world's most intelligent people have chosen challenging and intrinsically rewarding professions that offer no hope of wealth, prestige or power.

According to a previous article written by Herrnstein, accountants and auditors tend to have higher IQs than bakers, and thus Herrnstein concludes that individuals with higher IQs are held in higher esteem due to the material reward given to them from the society in which we live (Herrnstein, 1971). The same argument is presented in *The Bell Curve*, but with the number of white collar crimes presented in their own data, it is difficult to see the legitimacy of the argument. Surely Herrnstein and Murray wouldn't say that a crooked lawyer who makes $200,000 a year is held in higher esteem by society than a social worker who works for little or no money to help rebuild the slums of the inner-city.

If membership in the cognitive elite rests on being endowed with a high IQ, then the best advice that Herrnstein and Murray could offer to students with high IQs would be not to go on to college. They should enter the work force immediately after high school to begin maximizing their economic potential. But not all intelligent youngsters seem ready to choose financial success to the exclusion of an enjoyable, fulfilling profession. Clearly, there are other factors besides IQ bearing on the success of individuals. In fact, who could say that any executives exercise their mental aptitude to the extent that would be expected as representatives of the "cognitive elite." Many working-class jobs require at least as much applied intelligence as a CEO.

Herrnstein and Murray adopt an equally unfortunate stance toward the "cognitively challenged" people engaging in relationships. "It has become much more difficult for a person of low cognitive ability to figure out why marriage is a good thing, and, once in a marriage, more difficult to figure out why one should stick with it through bad times" (p. 544). At this point,

what is again disturbing about Herrnstein and Murrays analysis involves the way the study is divided up and what questions are asked. Their primary interest in women centers on questions of bearing children out of wedlock, being on welfare and having poor parenting skills. Men, on the other hand, fall into the other stereotypical category of unemployment and crime.

The prediction from their analysis involves a bizarre sort of disinterested fascism on behalf of the majority of the people who would rather stay isolated from the "reservations" where the cognitively challenged will be harbored. "In short, by custodial state, we have in mind a high-tech and more lavish version of the Indian reservation for some substantial minority of the nation's population, while the rest of America tries to go about its business" (p. 526). To help combat the chaos of crime that will unfold, there should be "a core of common law, combined with the original concept of negligence and liability in tort law, the mechanism for running a society easily understood by all, and a basis for the straightforward lessons that parents at all levels of cognitive ability above the lowest can teach their children about how to behave as they grow up" (p. 546).

Regarding the practical reasoning required to make decisions, Herrnstein and Murray believe, "The difference between people of low cognitive ability and the rest of society may be put in terms of a metaphor. Everyone has a moral compass, but some of those compasses are more susceptible to magnetic storms than others" (p. 543). Instead of a metaphor, I would like to use an analogy. The entire commentary presented above sounds like the macabre propaganda explicated by the "cognitive elite" pigs from George Orwell's Animal Farm:

> The birds did not understand Snowball's long words, but they accepted his explanation, and all the humbler animals set to work to learn the new maxim by heart. FOUR LEGS GOOD, TWO LEGS BAD, was inscribed on the end wall of the barn, above the Seven Commandments and in bigger letters (Orwell, 1946, p. 41).

And of course, fitting for the premise of *The Bell Curve*, we cannot forget, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (p. 123).

Conclusion

Clearly, *The Bell Curve* reflects the frustrations over the current socioeconomic dilemmas that have emerged with the onslaught of the postmodern age. The promises of technology and science to better our society have not delivered to the general extent that many believed possible. In a similar sense, the depth that the human sciences assured us in helping to improve the human condition has also been generally disappointing.

The most valuable form of inquiry to clarify methodological and theoretical quandaries, epistemology, has been neglected within the disciplines outside of academic philosophy for the better part of this century. Instead, most disciplines provide students with rote knowledge of theories and methodologies that are not justified in reason, but are logged into memory.

In this age, it is very easy to be labeled a deconstructionist if one makes any attempt to critique the claims asserted and methodology employed in such studies as *The Bell Curve*; on the other hand one can easily be labeled a racist by supporting such claims. Both allegations are extreme and usually unwarranted. The fact is that *The Bell Curve* consists of no dependable scientific evidence or consistent argument to suggest that there is a relation between ethnicity and cognitive ability. In fact, the body of data is so immense that, if one were to examine the appendices with no knowledge of the book's premise, a large number of varying inferences could be drawn about both the data and the topic of the book. With this notion, the presuppositions of the study ride on a paranoid ideology that has been around for thousands of years.

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Editorial Board

John Covaleskie	Andrew Coulson
jcovales@nmu.edu	*andrewco@ix.netcom.com*

Alan Davis
adavis@castle.cudenver.edu

Mark E. Fetler
mfetler@ctc.ca.gov

Thomas F. Green
tfgreen@mailbox.syr.edu

Alison I. Griffith
agriffith@edu.yorku.ca

Arlen Gullickson
gullickson@gw.wmich.edu

Ernest R. House
ernie.house@colorado.edu

Aimee Howley
ess016@marshall.wvnet.edu

Craig B. Howley
u56e3@wvnvm.bitnet

William Hunter
hunter@acs.ucalgary.ca

Richard M. Jaeger
rmjaeger@iris.uncg.edu

Benjamin Levin
levin@ccu.umanitoba.ca

Thomas Mauhs-Pugh
thomas.mauhs- pugh@dartmouth.edu

Dewayne Matthews
dm@wiche.edu

Mary P. McKeown
iadmpm@asuvm.inre.asu.edu

Les McLean
lmclean@oise.on.ca

Susan Bobbitt Nolen
sunolen@u.washington.edu

Anne L. Pemberton
apembert@pen.k12.va.us

Hugh G. Petrie
prohugh@ubvms.cc.buffalo.edu

Richard C. Richardson
richard.richardson@asu.edu

Anthony G. Rud Jr.
rud@purdue.edu

Dennis Sayers
dmsayers@ucdavis.edu

Jay Scribner
jayscrib@tenet.edu

Robert Stonehill
rstonehi@inet.ed.gov

Robert T. Stout
stout@asu.edu