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AUTHOR Epps, Edgar G.  
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ABSTRACT

Arthur R. Jensen's article presented no new data: it only reorganized a biased sample of already existent data. Nevertheless, it has been taken by opponents of school integration as definitive scientific evidence of the innate inequality of black and white students. Jensen and Van Den Haag advocate additional studies on individual learning ability before schools are given funds to help them desegregate. They also ask for an "objective examination of the educational effects of compulsory desegregation." Although this would slow school integration, such studies would be useful if they also included data on socioeconomic status and race of persons in the same classroom, racial attitudes of classroom teachers and school administrators, presence of ability tracking, the quality of classroom interaction, etc. Even without these qualifications, no studies have found that the performance of black students declines as a result of desegregation. Desegregation must have high priority, if to do no more than prevent the unequal distribution of educational resources. Jensen's articles and those of others provide school personnel and policy makers with an excuse for systematic discrimination against minority groups and other poor children. (JM)

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RACE, INTELLIGENCE, AND LEARNING: SOME CONSEQUENCES  
OF THE MISUSE OF TEST RESULTS

By

Edgar G. Epps, Director

DIVISION OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE\*

Tuskegee Institute, Alabama

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*Beginning,*

\*In September, 1970, Professor Epps will be affiliated with the Department of Education, The University of Chicago.

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The proposal that the race issue "could benefit from a period of 'benign neglect' " was advanced by Daniel Patrick Moynihan earlier this year in a memorandum submitted to the President on January 19, 1970 (for a public reply signed by representatives of the Black Community, see The Crisis, April, 1970, pp. 156-157).

My initial reaction to the chairman's request that I serve on this panel to discuss "Race, Intelligence, and Learning" was that I was sick of the "Nature-Nurture" controversy and that we would all benefit if Mr. Jensen and his theories could be subjected to a long period of "benign neglect." After reading this article, the reactions to the article, and the rejoinders to the reactions, I am amazed that serious professionals in sociology, psychology and education continue to spend their time and energy preparing rebuttals. The only justification for expending our energies in this fashion seems to be the need to counteract racist usages of the data and their interpretation. As Deutsch (1969) pointed out, ". . . . the central theme of the Jensen piece is a wholly anti-democratic engenic position . . . . ." (p. 524). Deutsch also points out, however, that "Contrary to the impression given by the mass media, Jensen offers no new data to support this position, but only a reorganization of existing old data." (p. 526).

Selected statements from Jensen's own writings indicate that he is aware

of the non-existence of scientific evidence to support his hypothesis. In the introduction to a chapter in the book he edited with Martin Deutsch and Irwin Katz (Deutsch, Katz, and Jensen, 1968, p. 9), Jensen makes the following statement: "Data that would permit firm conclusions about the genetic basis of differences among ethnic groups in measured intelligence do not exist." Jensen knew that this state of affairs still existed when he wrote the Harvard Educational Review article. The following quotation makes this fact perfectly clear:

All of the major heritability studies reported in the literature are based on samples of white European and North American populations, and our knowledge of intelligence in different racial and cultural groups within these populations is nil. For example, no adequate studies have been based on samples of the Negro population of the United States. (Jensen, 1969a, pp. 64-65).

Jensen has also stated that he believes . . . . "the cause of the observed differences in IQ and scholastic performance among different racial groups is still an open question . . . ." (1969b, p. 213). However, he asserts that a genetic hypothesis is "reasonable" and that the research needed to test this hypothesis should be given a high priority. I would disagree very strongly with his ordering of priorities. In my value system, equality of opportunity would rank first.

One of the most unfortunate consequences of Jensen's article is that it has

provided new pseudoscientific\* evidence for racists who seek support for their notions concerning innate racial differences. As one of his less restrained critics has suggested, intended or not, the article has served to promote prejudice (Alfert, 1969). The fact that this situation developed in spite of Jensen's own statement that the evidence required to prove his position was non-existent, suggests that there is a "market" for racist materials in this country. Jensen's more controversial statements were rapidly disseminated by the news media. This implies that the communication leaders were aware of the popular interest in racially loaded statements from the scientific community. Jensen could have presented his data in a manner which would have made such interpretations difficult, if not impossible.

Martin Deutsch (1969, p. 537) has stated that conflicting and contradictory reporting makes it very difficult to take the Jensen article seriously in either scientific or logical terms. His bias in selecting studies to include in his review is also noted by Deutsch (p. 544). Allison Davis (1968) has written that "The strongest evidence of the educability potential of the masses of Negro children from low status families has been afforded by the studies of the significant increase in the I. Q. of Southern Negro children with each year of residence in Northern Cities." (p. 128). The studies by Klineberg (1935) and Lee (1951) on the effect of migration to Northern cities on raising the

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\*Hirsh (1969) refers to the heredity vs. environment conflict as a Pseudo-question.

performance of Black children on I. Q. tests were not included in Jensen's review. Davis estimates that the average I. Q. of Black children in Chicago is about 97 at age 9. This is 10 points higher than the mean of 87 obtained by Klineberg 15 years earlier. Davis attributes this gain to the ". . . . total process of acculturation, including the learning of linguistic and academic habits . . . ." (p. 129). At this rate he estimates, the average will be 100 within a decade.

Another example of selective reporting can be seen in Jensen's use of Armed Forces Qualification Test scores (1969a, pp. 87-88). Jensen cited the following summary statement: "Nationally only 19 per cent of whites failed the mental tests, compared with a failure rate of 68 per cent for Negroes" (U. S. News and World Report, 1966, p. 78). The same article, however, carried the following quotation from American Education (de Neufville & Connor, 1966):

Throughout the United States the failure rate of whites on these examinations averages one-fourth that of Negroes. The Exception is West Virginia, where whites and Negroes fail in equal - and substantial - numbers [italics added].

The article also points out that a 1963 U. S. Department of Labor study reported that the majority of young men failing the AFQT, white and Black alike, were the products of poverty. In addition, the article makes it clear that Southern whites score below Northern whites and that Southern Blacks score below Northern Blacks. Citing the results of a U. S. Office of Education study, the following statement appears on p. 79: "Also, Southern Negroes scored

farther below Southern whites than did Northern Negroes below Northern whites - a regional finding that correlates with the armed forces mental test results. " One final quotation from the U. S. News and World Report article is needed to place the problem in proper perspective.

The extreme variations in regional performance clearly suggest that schools have not erased inequality based on accidents of geography; the extreme racial variations make it clear that the schools have yet to overcome the environmental handicaps of the nation's Negro students. (p. 79)

Having pursued the issue this far, I decided to look at the original article which appeared in American Education (de Neufville and Conner, 1966). The AFQT is described as follows:

This test does not measure innate intelligence or scholastic aptitude - it measures precisely those skills that are most important in terms of jobs and income. (p. 4)

These are primarily reading ability and elementary computational skills. State by state test results are presented in a table on page 9 of this article. The results indicate that while, within each state, blacks have higher failure rates than whites, blacks in Washington are less likely to fail (25.0 per cent) than whites in the following eight states: Tennessee (43.7 per cent)\*, Kentucky (38.0 per cent)\*, North Carolina (37.9 per cent)\*, West Virginia (35.3 per cent)\*,

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\*Refers to failure rates of Whites in these states.

Virginia (33.6 per cent)\*, Texas (32.5 per cent)\*, Louisiana (25.4 per cent)\*, and Mississippi (25.2 per cent)\*. Blacks in Rhode Island (28.3 per cent) are less likely to fail than are whites in six states. The authors of this article are very clear in indicating that these regional differences point to a serious inequality of educational opportunity. However, if we use Jensen's genetic interpretation, we would have to conclude that whites in the Southern States are genetically inferior in mental ability when compared to Northern and Western whites in general, and to Blacks in two states. It should be obvious that if this additional data had appeared in the Jensen article, racists would have found less comfort in its conclusions. Jensen's hypothesis would seem less "reasonable" to Southern Congressmen if it also implied Southern white inferiority.

The major mischief which may result from the article is that it can be used by those policy makers who want to slow down the move toward equality of educational opportunity. Jensen seems to be the latest star witness for segregationists in congress. Recently, a newspaper report (Atlanta Constitution, June 30, 1970, p. 11a), stated that Jensen and Ernest Van Den Haag told a House education committee that more scientific studies should be made on individual learning ability before schools are given funds to help them desegregate. They also asked for an "objective examination of the educational effects of compulsory desegregation." I would welcome the results of such a study if it also included data on socioeconomic status and race of persons in the same classroom (see

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\*Refers to failure rates of Whites in these states.

McPartland, 1969), racial attitudes of classroom teachers, racial attitudes of school administrators, presence or absence of ability tracking, the quality of classroom interaction, etc. Each of these variables would influence the degree of enhancement or impairment likely to result from compulsory desegregation. Even without these qualifications, I know of no studies which demonstrate that the performance of Black students declines as a result of desegregation. All evidence points in the opposite direction; performance is enhanced.

On the matter of educational priorities, it would seem to me that desegregation must of necessity have a high priority. Unless Blacks and whites are in the same classrooms, school administrators will nearly always find some means of subverting attempts to provide equality of educational opportunities. Even when middle class Black parents are well organized and extremely vigilant concerning their children's education, it is difficult to keep administrators from diverting funds, programs, and qualified teachers from predominantly Black schools to predominantly white schools (see Walker, 1970).

Of the many problems in the area of testing (cultural bias, race of tester effects, motivation for test - taking, test sophistication, etc.), probably the most important drawback is the ease with which test results lend themselves to elitist - racist interpretations. This is particularly alarming because, as Goslin (1967, pp. 130-132) has pointed out, survey data indicate that the more teachers know about tests and testing, the more likely they are to accept the idea of classifying children according to their (presumed innate) abilities on the basis of test results.

Teachers who express confidence in the accuracy of standardized tests also believe that the abilities measured are, to a significant degree, innate rather than learned. Thus, they are quite willing to place children in "dead-end" programs on the basis of such scores.

In this regard, Jensen's article and others stressing differential education levels based on test results provide school personnel and policy makers with an excuse for systematic discrimination against minority groups and other poor children. For this reason, Black psychologists are demanding a five year halt in ability testing. As Robert Green has stated, "The social harm of testing is so great that it outweighs the educational value of the tests where minority groups are concerned" (quoted in Pine, 1969, p. 3). The harmful effects of systematic misclassification of minority students is implied in Duncan's (1968) statement that "the bulk of the influence of intelligence on occupation is indirect, via education." The traditional misuse of test results to systematically limit the amount of education available to Blacks is one of the most tragic examples of entrenched institutional racism currently existing in America. The kind of "backlash" that results in the demand for cessation of ability testing is one consequence of the eager acceptance of Jensen's article as a definitive scientific work on racial differences in intelligence.

Rather than urging scientists to pursue the pseudo-question of heredity vs. environment, a much more fruitful approach would encourage research into the problem of making the curriculum more closely related to the life styles of

minority group and poor children. Education should be more closely fitted to the child's developmental state and culturally conditioned cognitive patterns. Cynthia Deutsch (1968) has pointed out that, even in a non-verbal area such as perceptual discrimination, performance is related to the kinds of experiences provided within each culture and subculture. Fitting the teaching to the child's preferred learning style does not, however, imply that ceilings should be placed on levels of educational attainment.

Finally, in line with my own research interests, much more attention needs to be devoted to problems of motivation. In my opinion, this is essentially a structural problem. Limitations on opportunities imposed by overt and covert discrimination in employment, housing, communication, and access to higher education can only work to lower the academic motivation of minority group students. The pattern of stigmatizing whole groups to the extent that no level of individual achievement ever earns acceptability for minority group members is an additional motivational barrier.

As I have indicated elsewhere (Epps, 1969) there are regional differences in personality-attitude variables associated with academic motivation and achievement. Among Black high school students, those living in a northern city score higher on achievement related-attitudes as well as on vocabulary tests. For policy makers, one of the most significant differences between northern and southern Black students occurs on a measure of perceived limitations on opportunities. Southern students view the opportunity structure as being more

limited. This measure is also significantly related to academic achievement. Thus, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that actual differences in the opportunity structure are reflected in the academic motivation and performance of high school students. It also would appear reasonable to expect improvements in opportunities to be accompanied by improvements in performance. This is a question which should be subjected to substantial additional research.

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