The Meaning of Dr. Jensen's Study of IQ Disparities

By Joshua Lederberg

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"HOW MUCH CAN WE BOOST IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" is a thoughtful review by Berkeley psychologist Arthur R. Jensen. It should be read and discussed by a far larger audience than is likely to see it in the winter issue of the Harvord Ed. School Bulletin. It has much to say, but unfortunately only secondhand in response to several popular commentaries that Jensen has written (and I would say incautious) remarks at the expense of a great deal of Dr. Jensen's wisdom and scholarly reserve.

The meat of his discussion concerns the effort to bridge the IQ gap between the white and Negro communities in the United States. There can be no evasion of the raw statistics; which are witnessed by an average reading retardation of one to three years. The question is whether we can design educational programs to erase that painful statistic.

JENKINS CAREFUL to insist that we focus not on such social changes as the loss of a few controversial and theretofore lacking among Negroes nor universal education among whites. He does point out, wearily, that we cannot overlook the social demand for children of that age are hidden in the bosom of their families; in many states it is even illegal to report them, and in some, for example, in the District of Columbia. There can be no evasion of the raw fact as they do within this position will be difficult to confirm or refute by any experiments that we can foresee as realistically possible in the face of existing cultural alienation. Large segments of either community refuse to be color blind. How then can we discuss experiments like adoption of black children into white families, with any realistic expectations of their answering such subtle questions as the genetic basis of the development of the brain?

We part company on the IQ gap in the educational system, with Jensen’s genetic hypothesis as a new role in the difference between racial groups as they do within. This position will be difficult to confirm or refute by any experiments that we can foresee as realistically possible in the face of existing cultural alienation. Large segments of either community refuse to be color blind. How then can we discuss experiments like adoption of black children into white families, with any realistic expectations of their answering such subtle questions as the genetic basis of the development of the brain?

We part company on the impact of racial alienation on intellectual development. I believe this is quite sufficient to account for the IQ gap without having to speculate about other genetic factors. Jensen fails to see enough difference in early experiences, which is to say that the genes account for more in the face of existing cultural alienation. Large segments of either community refuse to be color blind. How then can we discuss experiments like adoption of black children into white families, with any realistic expectations of their answering such subtle questions as the genetic basis of the development of the brain?

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