

S. J. Gould New York; Norton 1986

the school of white

the white mean for nine Southern states (43.94). He found the same pattern for Beta, where blacks of six Northern states averaged 34.63, and whites of fourteen Southern states, 31.11. Hereditarians had their pat answer, as usual: only the best Negroes had been smart enough to move North. To people of good will and common sense an explanation in terms of educational quality has always seemed more reasonable, especially since Montagu also found such high correlations between a state's expenditure for education and the average score of its recruits.

One other persistent correlation threatened Yerkes's hereditarian convictions, and his rescuing argument became a major social weapon in later political campaigns for restricting immigration. Test scores had been tabulated by country of origin, and Yerkes noted the pattern so dear to the hearts of Nordic supremacists. He divided recruits by country of origin into English, Scandinavian, and Teutonic on one side, and Latin and Slavic on the other, and stated (p. 699): "the differences are considerable (an extreme range of practically two years mental age)"—favoring the Nordics, of course.

But Yerkes acknowledged a potential problem. Most Latins and Slavs had arrived recently and spoke English either poorly or not at all; the main wave of Teutonic immigration had passed long before. According to Yerkes's protocol, it shouldn't have mattered. Men who could not speak English suffered no penalty. They took Beta, a pictorial test that supposedly measured innate ability independent of literacy and language. Yet the data still showed an apparent penalty for unfamiliarity with English. Of white recruits who scored E in Alpha and therefore took Beta as well (pp. 382-383), speakers of English averaged 101.6 in Beta, while nonspeakers averaged only 77.8. On the individual performance scale, which eliminated the harassment and confusion of Beta, native and foreign-born recruits did not differ (p. 403). (But very few men were ever given these individual tests, and they did not affect national averages.) Yerkes had to admit (p. 395): "There are indications to the effect that individuals handicapped by language difficulty and illiteracy are penalized to an appreciable degree in Beta as compared with men not so handicapped."

Another correlation was even more potentially disturbing. Yerkes found that average test scores for foreign-born recruits rose consistently with years of residence in America.

Select the emigrants as the explanation of improvement 251

YEARS OF RESIDENCE	AVERAGE MENTAL AGE
0-5	11.29
6-10	11.70
11-15	12.53
16-20	13.50
20-	13.74

Didn't this indicate that familiarity with American ways, and not innate intelligence, regulated the differences in scores? Yerkes admitted the possibility, but held out strong hope for a hereditarian salvation (p. 704):

Apparently then the group that has been longer resident in this country does somewhat better* in intelligence examination. It is not possible to state whether the difference is caused by the better adaptation of the more thoroughly Americanized group to the situation of the examination or whether some other factor is operative. It might be, for instance, that the more intelligent immigrants succeed and therefore remain in this country, but this suggestion is weakened by the fact that so many successful immigrants do return to Europe. At best we can but leave for future decision the question as to whether the differences represent a real difference of intelligence or an artifact of the method of examination.

The Teutonic supremacists would soon supply that decision: recent immigration had drawn the dregs of Europe, lower-class Latins and Slavs. Immigrants of longer residence belonged predominantly to superior northern stocks. The correlation with years in America was an artifact of genetic status.

The army mental tests could have provided an impetus for social reform, since they documented that environmental disadvantages were robbing from millions of people an opportunity to develop their intellectual skills. Again and again, the data pointed to strong correlations between test scores and environment. Again and again, those who wrote and administered the tests invented tortuous, ad hoc explanations to preserve their hereditarian prejudices.

How powerful the hereditarian biases of Terman, Goddard, and Yerkes must have been to make them so blind to immediate

*Note how choice of language can serve as an indication of bias. This 2.5 year difference in mental ages (13.74-11.29) only represents "somewhat better" performance. The smaller (but presumably hereditary) difference of 2 years between Nordic-Teutonic and Latin-Slav groups had been described as "considerable."

short greatly vs 251 white then