

Skin Color and Intelligence in African Americans

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The relation between skin color and intelligence was examined in a representative sample of 430 adult African Americans. A statistically significant positive correlation of 0.17 was obtained between light skin color and intelligence. It is proposed that the result supports the hypothesis that the level of intelligence in African Americans is significantly determined by the proportion of Caucasian genes.

KEY WORDS: intelligence; skin color; race differences; r-K theory.

A general theory of human population differences in terms of r-K reproductive strategy has been advanced by Rushton (2000). The concept of r-K reproductive strategy is taken from evolutionary biology to describe the alternatives of producing large numbers of offspring of which few survive and designated the r strategy, and producing only a few offspring of which many more survive. Fish, amphibians and reptiles adopt the r strategy, while mammals adopt the K strategy. Species adopting the r strategy let their offspring fend for themselves while species adopting the K strategy look after their offspring during infancy and childhood. In general species adopting the K strategy have longer lives, larger brains and are more intelligent than species adopting the r strategy. In his application of this concept to humans, Rushton has proposed that Mongoloids have evolved the strongest K strategy, Negroids are stronger r strategists, while Caucasoids fall intermediate but are closer to Mongoloids. Rushton uses this general theory to explain a large number of differences between the three races including brain size, intelligence, sexuality and numbers of children. Race differences

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within the context of *r/K* theory are thus of great relevance to population issues generally.

In regard to intelligence, there is considerable evidence that there are race differences consistent with Rushton's theory such that Mongoloids have the highest average IQs of about 105, Caucasoids have average IQs of around 100 and Negroids have average IQs of around 70. The world wide evidence for this generalization is presented in Lynn (1997) and Rushton (2000). In the United States it has been found in numerous studies that the average IQ of African Americans is around 85 (Jensen, 1998; Mackintosh, 1998). This is consistent with the world wide evidence because many African Americans have mixed Negroid and Causasoid ancestry and consequently fall intermediate between the two parent races. Despite these well established racial differences in average IQs, there is no consensus on whether they have a genetic basis, as demanded by Rushton's theory, or whether they are wholly environmentally determined. The case for a genetic basis has been presented by Jensen (1998) and Rushton (2000), while the case for environmental determination has been presented by Brody (1992) and Mackintosh (1998).

It has long been believed that it would be possible to resolve the disputed issue of whether genetic factors are involved in the black-white difference in intelligence by an examination of the relationship between intelligence and the amount of white ancestry among African Americans and other black and colored populations with significant amounts of white ancestry. If genetic factors are partly responsible for the black-white difference, there should be a positive association between the proportion of white ancestry and intelligence.

The first attempts to test this hypothesis consisted of taking skin color as a measure of the amount of white ancestry on the assumption that the lighter the skin the greater the proportion of white ancestors and hence of white genes. The hypothesis that genetic factors are involved in the black-white difference in intelligence predicts that there should be a positive association between light skin and intelligence. The examination of whether such an association exists would be a test of the genetic theory in so far as that the absence of an association would disconfirm the theory.

The early research on the relation between skin color and intelligence among black populations was reviewed by Shuey (1966). She summarised 18 studies of which 15 were carried out in the United States, two in Jamaica and one in Canada. Some association between lightness of skin and intelligence was found in 16 of the studies. However, the magnitude of the association between skin color and intelligence was quite low. Only four of the studies expressed the relationship in terms of correlations. These were car-