

# Letters

## Science and the Race Problem

*Science* for 1 November 1963 carried a report (1), prepared by a committee of the AAAS, entitled "Science and the race problem." After noting conflicting evidence for Negro-white differences in mental ability, the committee writes:

The issues concern not only the validity of allegedly scientific conclusions but also fundamental principles that affect the integrity of science. Moreover, the alleged evidence [that is, of racial differences] is being used to challenge a principle fundamental to our political system, and to influence the outcome of the present crisis in the relations between racial groups in the United States.

If this statement means what it seems to mean, namely, that evidence of racial differences is being used by scientists to deny Negroes their civil rights, it is, to the best of our knowledge, completely erroneous.

Civil rights, as legally defined, include the right to vote, to hold public office, and to have free access to the courts. These rights have on occasion been denied to Negroes who were underprivileged, or who are poor and without social or political influence, as they have been denied to whites who fall in the same categories. But no responsible scientist who believes in native differences between Negroes and whites has advocated the withdrawal of civil rights from *anyone*. Several writers, scientists and others, have urged that the *facts* of racial differences must be faced by those in power; and that the demands for social privileges and associations, based on the no-difference assumption, will lead to continuing strife and could lead to national disaster. There are no moral imperatives which demand social acceptance of Negroes by whites, and the Constitution does not guarantee social "rights" to anyone—Negro or white. However, the more extreme champions of "rights" for Negroes often include in

their demands forms of legal compulsion which cannot be tolerated in a free society.

We offer the following comments on certain specific allegations made by the committee with which we are in sharp disagreement.

1) Have the facts regarding race differences been fairly presented? The committee holds that the assertions of Carleton Putnam (2), that facts with regard to racial differences have been distorted and suppressed by equalitarians, are "unfounded." On the contrary, it says:

There is, in our opinion, no evidence to support the claim, advanced by Professor George and Mr. Putnam, that a group of scientists has conspired to mislead the public about the scientific evidence regarding racial differences. This assertion can only reflect a lack of understanding of the nature of the scientific process.

This statement, we believe, is either disingenuous or uninformed.

Let us cite chapter and verse. Up to World War II, both the hereditarian and environmentalist views of racial differences were, on the whole, fairly presented. After the war, largely through the efforts of disciples of Franz Boas and the influence of Gunnar Myrdal's book, equalitarianism began to be presented as official dogma to be accepted as an act of faith. Those not concurring were first criticized, then lampooned or denounced. In 1947, Garrett (3) published an article pointing out that psychometric evidence in the United States strongly favored the nonenvironmental origin of Negro-white differences. Instead of criticism of his data and interpretations (which he expected and welcomed), Garrett was denounced personally: he was reminded of what happened to Hitler, contemptuously asked what could be expected of one born in Virginia, and so forth. Not a single critic raised questions impugning the objectivity of the data in the article, except one man who wanted to know why his

study had not been included. (He was told that another study, better than his, was included.)

In 1956, McGurk (4) published in *U.S. News and World Report* a study of comparative performance when groups of Negroes and whites are matched for background variables generally subsumed under the term "environment." In six studies (all he could find in the literature), McGurk found the overlap in these matched samples to be little if any greater than that found in random samples. McGurk did not recommend that the Negro be disenfranchised or that his civil rights be canceled. However, he was castigated by rabid equalitarians, resolutions were passed condemning his study, the newspapers were bombarded with denunciatory letters, he and his wife were besieged with anonymous telephone calls, he was "silenced" by his university for a year, and it was demanded that he be expelled from the American Psychological Association. His crime? He had published what he found. Only one criticism, that, a minor one, was made of his data.

In 1961, Garrett published (by invitation of the editor) a paper (5) in which he attempted to analyze the predominant factors which had given impetus to equalitarianism. The same clique (mostly followers of Boas) sprang into action: The editor was rebuked for having asked for the paper, the author was belittled and insulted.

In 1958, Shuey's book (6) appeared. This author examined, analyzed, and tabulated the mental-test data in all of the more than 200 studies of racial differences made in the United States over the preceding 40 years. It was a stupendous task, carefully and meticulously carried through. Yet no national publisher would take the book: it was too "controversial," "too biased," "wouldn't be a good commercial risk" (probably an honest opinion), "didn't fit into the schedule," and so on. Yet the book was favorably reviewed by several outstanding social scientists, one being the late R. S. Woodworth, often called the "dean" of American psychologists. Putnam's semipopular book (2), now in its second hundred thousand, was turned down by seven New York publishers before it was accepted by a small firm specializing in "controversial" literature. Nathaniel Weyl's scholarly study (7) of the Negro in America was published by the same firm.

In 1962, W. C. George published a

brief review (8) giving the evidence for the genetic origin of many racial differences. The committee finds the George work "contentious" and mentions that it was commissioned by the governor of Alabama. The implication, we suppose, is that the contents of the George study were predetermined by reason of its source. But is this a good reason for not examining the data? A booklet entitled "Race and Intelligence" was published in 1963 under the auspices of the B'nai B'rith. Does its origin immediately condemn this publication as unsound? Suffice it to say that George was in no way limited as to what he could say, and that his findings were published as he set them down. The George study was issued in its present form simply because it would have been impossible to get publication in a national journal. These are closed to all but equalitarian views.

Frequently we have been told by young scientists that they would not dare to "come out" for hereditary differences between Negroes and whites; their promotions, even their jobs would be in jeopardy. Even in the South, young scientists find that school officials have the attitude that it is better to keep quiet and play it safe: reprisals are not unknown.

Nor are reprisals confined to the academic community. In a recent school desegregation case in Georgia (9), two lawyers representing a group of white parents in Savannah won a verdict against desegregation on the grounds that differences in mental alertness between Negro and white pupils were so great that education of the white pupils would be jeopardized by mass mixing. Five scientists testified that the differences in I.Q. between Negroes and whites in Georgia are on the average from 15 to 20 points in favor of the whites, and that Negro pupils in the elementary schools lag behind the whites by from 1 to 3 grades. The attorney-general of the United States in a recent speech called the two lawyers who defended the white pupils "irresponsible." He failed to note that the experimental evidence as to the evil effects of segregation on the Negro child's personality (presented to the Supreme Court in 1954) was shown to be invalid. And he neglected to denounce the man who gave this testimony.

It is true, of course, that articles are refused publication for many reasons, that books are often rejected by publishers, and that young faculty mem-

bers are intimidated in various ways. And it will be contended that unfortunate incidents of judgment or policy do not in themselves demonstrate the presence of systematized intolerance toward those who hold the race-differences hypothesis. We reject this argument as fallacious in the present context. Attacks on those who support racial differences are too persistent, too regular, and too emotional to be unplanned and accidental. And so is the name calling.

In summary, we believe the evidence is clear that the equalitarian position is being represented as *the* accepted scientific dogma, and that any attempt to question equalitarian data is to be denounced as somehow reprehensible and even immoral. This attitude is, of course, totally destructive of academic freedom.

2) Was the Supreme Court decision of 1954 on school desegregation determined by *legal* rather than by *psychosocial* evidence? The committee believes it was. It contends that "the question at issue in the 1954 Supreme Court decision was whether separate school facilities *inherently* [italics ours] lead to inequality of treatment; again the basic principle of equality was not at issue."

The notion that the Court considered *only* the effects of segregation on the Negro children and completely ignored the possibility of mental differences seems to us to be incredibly naive. What is meant by "similar age and qualifications" and "solely because of race"? This can only mean that the Court assumed complete racial equality in intelligence and learning ability, in the belief that differences were confined to skin color. Furthermore, opinions as to the evil effects of separate schools were given the Court only by equalitarians who certainly implied, if they did not assert, that there are no race differences. Invariably they wrote of "segregation, prejudice, and discrimination" as though the first always involved the second and the third.

The committee says further:

The only reference to science in the 1954 decision appears in connection with footnote 11 to that decision.

This footnote refers to a section which considers the question "Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal

educational opportunities?" The Court's answer was that it does. It said:

"To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way likely never to be undone.

The committee argues that since differences in mental ability were "quite irrelevant," to be heard George should have offered evidence that separate schools do not influence adversely the "hearts and minds" of the Negro pupils. Otherwise, in the committee's view, George's paper "seriously compromises the usefulness of science to the judicial process."

But is this a fair inference? George's paper, "The Biology of the Race Problem," dealt only with the evidence for *genetic* differences in racial traits, not with the effects of school segregation on the Negro child's "heart and mind." George is neither a social scientist nor a schoolman, and his interest in school segregation lay chiefly in the possibility of intermarriage which arises in any close and intimate social situation, such as schools (10).

The committee must have assumed that at least the Court was strongly impressed by testimony as to the evil effects of separate schools on the Negro. What was the basis for this assumption? Apart from the vigorous assertions of white, adult social scientists who felt that separation *must* be galling and frustrating (as it may have been to them), the only *experimental* evidence as to the bad effects of separate schools for Negroes and whites seems to have been the testimony of K. B. Clark (11), who investigated the preference of Negro school children, in segregated and nonsegregated schools, for brown and white dolls. But van den Haag (12), who examined critically Clark's evidence, found that integration, not segregation, injured the Negro child's "self-image." Van den Haag concluded that, either knowingly or unknowingly Clark "misled the Court." For a full discussion of Clark's evidence, see van den Haag (12).

3) Gunnar Myrdal and his influence on the racial problem: The committee refers to Myrdal's *The American Dilemma* as an "outstanding example" of sociological research. That the Myrdal book had considerable influence in determining the Supreme Court's decision is implied by the reference to "generally Myrdal" in footnote 11. Myrdal's book does indeed contain

many useful facts regarding race relations, the roles of minority groups in U.S. society, the expressed hopes and aspirations of American Negroes for better jobs. Interestingly enough, Myrdal reports that the American Negro in the 1940's was not especially concerned with social equality. But Myrdal's book is strongly slanted toward equalitarianism; in fact no opposition view is recognized. Racial differences in mental ability are straight Boas, that is, environmentally determined.

We would agree that ordinarily when a man's scientific views are criticized, his character and political associations need not be drawn in. But there are times when knowledge of a man's background is crucial in enabling one properly to evaluate his work. This is true of Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish sociologist, selected by the Carnegie Foundation to make a study of the Negro problem in the United States. Myrdal's two volumes were published in 1944. Myrdal describes himself as a "social economist." He has no love for American institutions or for our system of government. He writes, for example, of the "cult of the constitution" which has been able to "block the popular will." He disapproves of the tendency in legal circles "to desire to regulate human behavior tyrannically by means of formal laws." It is hard to believe that the attitudes of Myrdal and his co-workers could lead to conclusions which are entirely objective. Yet the Committee describes this work as an "outstanding example" of sociological research.

In summary, we reiterate that responsible scientists who believe in racial differences have not advocated denial of the Negroes' civil rights. We assert, furthermore, that the free presentation of evidence concerning racial differences is virtually impossible in the present climate of suppression and intimidation. Regrettably, the AAAS committee in its report has done nothing to improve this situation; rather the opposite. In some instances, news stories and editorials based on the committee's statement appeared in newspapers throughout the country before copies of *Science* were delivered to subscribers. Was the prior distribution of the committee's report to the press intended to promote a calm consideration of the facts relating to a great national problem? Or was it designed to undermine the public's esteem of George and Putnam and thus to intimidate others who might venture to

examine publicly and critically the scientific bases of race?

We hold it to be vital that *all* of the evidence be examined before this nation undertakes any far-reaching program of social change which, once undertaken, cannot be reversed.

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This reply by Garrett and George and the earlier reply by Carleton Putnam [*Science* 142, 1419 (13 Dec. 1963)] to the report of the AAAS Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare, "Science and the race problem," add little to their earlier publications, which were the basis of the committee's comments. We therefore find no reason for modifying the views already expressed in our report.

They continue to discuss the views of certain anthropologists as in a court of law, where the adversary system requires attack upon the character and reputation of opposition witnesses. In science, however, all the evidence should be presented dispassionately and inclusively, and judged solely by scientific criteria. Impugning the character or political position of the people involved obscures and inhibits open scientific discussion. One should not be unduly surprised that in a society such as ours, which is engaged in an intense social debate, anyone—including scientists—who takes a stand on either side of the political issue should be subjected to adverse social pressures and anonymous telephone calls.

Furthermore, it is the quality, not quantity, of evidence that is significant in science. Scientists' time is poorly spent discussing studies where the observations are so confused by extraneous effects as to have little meaning.

When Garrett and George say that such studies of racial inequalities are not used to deny civil rights to Negroes, they are incorrect. Their own letter cites the case of *Stell vs. Savannah Board of Education*, in which supposed evidence on "mental alertness" of Negroes was used to prevent desegregation.

Our report is a statement about the relation between available scientific evidence and the issues of civil rights of racial groups—as interpreted by the Supreme Court. It concluded that sci-

entific evidence relevant to the 1954 Supreme Court decision is concerned with the effects of segregation on Negro children and that evidence on racial differences is not germane. Garrett and George have replied that George is not qualified to comment as a scientist on the effects of segregation on Negro children and that "his interest in school segregation lay chiefly in the possibility of intermarriage." This reply confirms the committee's original view that George has failed to distinguish what scientific evidence is relevant to the issue considered by the Court.

Finally, the press release date of the committee report coincided with the date of its publication in *Science*. The report was sent out in the usual manner, and coverage was determined by media editors, as usual.

We hope that the present discussions of the issue will lead to a greater clarification of the relation between scientific evidence and the race problem and that future discussions will be free of pejorative and irrelevant comment about the various scientists involved.

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#### References and Notes

1. "Science and the race problem. A report of the AAAS Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare," *Science* 142, 558 (1963).
2. C. Putnam, *Race and Reason* (Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1961).
3. H. E. Garrett, "Negro-white differences in mental ability in the United States," *Sci. Monthly* 65, 329 (1947).
4. F. C. J. McGurk, "A scientist's report on race differences," *U.S. News and World Report*, 41, 92 (21 Sept. 1956).
5. H. E. Garrett, "The equalitarian dogma," *Perspectives Biol. Med.* 4, 480 (1961).
6. A. M. Shuey, *The Testing of Negro Intelligence* (J. P. Bell, Lynchburg, Va., 1958).
7. N. Weyl, *The Negro in American Civilization* (Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1960).
8. W. C. George, *The Biology of the Race Problem* (Commission of the Governor of Alabama, 1962).
9. *Stell vs. Savannah Board of Education*, 318 F (2nd), 425 (1963).
10. The extent to which the committee misread or failed to read George's paper is shown in the following quotation: "To criticize a judicial decision by means of scientific evidence which is on its face wholly irrelevant to the issue is to conceal a fallacy in the cloak of scientific precision." Whose argument is here fallacious?
11. K. B. Clark and M. P. Clark, "Racial identification and preference in Negro children," in *Readings in Social Psychology*, T. M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley, Eds. (Holt, New York, 1947).
12. E. van den Haag, "Social science testimony in the desegregation cases—a reply to Professor Kenneth Clark," *Villanova Law Rev.* 6, 69 (1960).