



## Group Differences in Intelligence - Race

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**Since their inception, IQ tests have been employed to support a range of ideological agendas. Is there any evidence that there are innate racial differences when it comes to intelligence?**

During World War I, IQ tests developed by Robert Yerkes were given to army recruits where they showed differences between racial groups. This fact was eagerly embraced by the American Eugenics movement underway at the time. The differences were held as proof of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon intellect, a justification for racial segregation and an argument for tightening immigration policy.



The Iberians are believed to have been originally an African race, who thousands of years ago spread themselves through Spain over Western Europe. Their remains are found in the barrows, or burying places, in sundry parts of these countries. The skulls are of low, prognathous type. They came to Ireland, and mixed with the natives of the South and West, who themselves are supposed to have been of low type and descendants of savages of the Stone Age, who, in consequence of isolation from the rest of the world, had never been out-competed in the healthy struggle of life, and thus made way, according to the laws of nature, for superior races.

Debate about these differences has only continued since then. While controversy remains over how to define “race” and “intelligence” in the first place, there is further debate over what proportion of racial IQ difference can be attributed to biological vs. environmental factors. While most modern researchers agree that there is no genetic basis for the difference, it’s proven a challenge to explain exactly how and why it exists at all.

In 1994, the controversial book *The Bell Curve* claimed that inequality in the U.S was caused by innate racial IQ difference, and not the other way around. Both the American Anthropological Association and the American Psychological Association have distanced themselves from the claims in that book, however.

Today, discussion has shifted from the topic of difference to the underlying assumptions within IQ testing that give rise to that difference. There is now strong resistance to research into racial IQ differences because of historical associations with ideas like slavery, eugenics and “social Darwinism.”

Modern psychometrists focus instead on using tests that are truly culture- and background-neutral, and addressing questions of justice for those who’ve been disadvantaged. Research into group intellectual differences today is unlikely to find a platform, since many believe that the history associated with this field simply makes it ineligible for ethical scientific investigation. Most anthropologists and geneticists now consider race a largely sociopolitical phenomenon.



The banner features a bright orange background. At the top center is a white icon of a beaker with a flame, followed by the word "EXPLORABLE" in a white, sans-serif font. Below this, the phrase "Quiz Time!" is written in a white, cursive script. Three white-bordered boxes are arranged horizontally below the text. The first box contains a photograph of a pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck, with the text "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" underneath. The second box contains a photograph of several colorful pencils fanned out, with the text "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" underneath. The third box contains a photograph of a Ferris wheel at sunset, with the text "Quiz: Flags in Europe" underneath. In the bottom right corner of the banner, the text "See all quizzes =>" is written in white.

## The Validity of Intelligence Testing across Groups

A test’s validity depends on its ability to measure what it actually claims to measure. If a test measures a person’s IQ but simultaneously measures their deficit in formal education up till then, the test is necessarily less valid.

Most intelligence tests measure both fluid and crystallized intelligence, which has a large foundation in acquired knowledge and education. Because some people receive that education to a greater or lesser degree, IQ tests have been accused of being unfair and invalid.

Another criticism is that even when education levels are accounted for, cultural differences may still interfere with scores. If the entire concept of intelligence is culture-specific, it is also unfair to assess a person from one culture using the standards and definitions from a different culture.

Lastly, even when education levels and culture are controlled for, some small differences may remain. Researchers have investigated the complex reasons why and concede that racial stereotypes, testing bias and self-fulfilling prophecies around IQ could explain why certain groups may outperform others.

(Photo courtesy H. Strickland Constable, 1899, *Ireland from One or Two Neglected Points of View*)

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