

7/27/2012

Hi, Ron,

I haven't combed through Lynn's works for quotes, but my assumption is based on my familiarity with IQ researchers in general, and with the kind of elementary statistics and basic facts that everyone in this field, even the most ardent hereditarians, agree on: that the heritability of intelligence (within a group) is on the order of .5 to .8. That is considered a shocking fact to Gouldians who want to believe that it's zero. Yet at the same time, .5 (and even .8, which comes from a study of elderly Swedes, where environmental variation is small) is less than 1.0. That means environmental influences are not zero. One would have to be an idiot or a fanatical ideologue not to grasp this point. So you are basically assuming that Lynn is either an idiot or a fanatical ideologue. Also, I have never, ever, ever seen anyone claim that the heritability of IQ is 1.0 – have you? Yet that is the position you are calling the “Strong IQ” hypothesis.

For that matter, even these estimates pertain only to heritability within a group. One could even believe that heritability within a group is 1.0 (not that anyone does) and at the same time believe that differences between groups are mostly or entirely environmentally caused, as in the old analogy of cornfields in Nevada versus Iowa.

The responses from the blogosphere and magazine readers are perfectly consistent with my suspicions. When it comes to politically and emotionally charged issues (gender being a case I know a great deal about), a large percentage of commentators (including otherwise smart people) think in moronic dichotomies, and fail to acknowledge that the influence of genetics can be greater than zero but less than a hundred percent.

Feel free to post these comments if you think they would add to the discussion. But clearly the best thing to do would be to contact Lynn directly and ask him.

Best,
Steve