

**Race is More Than Just Skin Deep:
A Psychologist's View**

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This article defends the concept of "race" against a coordinated political campaign to deconstruct basic biology. It briefly reviews some of the most reliably documented Black-White differences, such as those in brain size, IQ, violent crime, testosterone, sexuality and AIDs. Although these racial differences are now reliably found worldwide (not just within the USA), many in the media and scholarly associations continue to try and deny them or attribute them to "political circumstance." "Statements on Race" made by organizations such as the American Association for Anthropology are discussed and found to be wanting.

Key Words: AAA Statement on Race, brain size, crime, evolution, intelligence.

I originally wrote this paper in reaction to a Knight-Ridder article ("Genetic Basis For Race Said To Be Just Skin Deep," October 13, 1996), which argued that race has no validity as a biological concept when applied to man, seeking to defend the concept of "race" against a coordinated political campaign to deconstruct basic biology. Since then numerous other media stories have appeared purporting to debunk the reality of race, some playing off policy statements by scholarly organizations such as the one adopted by the American Association of Anthropology on May 17, 1998. Worse, governments have become actively involved in propagating the misinformation.

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The most recent example of a policy statement on race by a scholarly organization is the one adopted by the American Association of Anthropology on May 17, 1998 (to be discussed further below). Yet the AAA Statement on Race is empirically false when it argues that “physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them” and that any observed group differences are the result of social conditioning and “political circumstance” (September 1998 *Anthropolgy Newsletter*, p. 3). To take one relevant example, consider the relationship between brain size and intelligence.

During the 19th century, physical anthropologists found that Blacks averaged smaller brains than Whites. Whether measuring the weight of the brain or the size of the cranial cavity, they consistently found a difference equivalent to about 100 cubic centimeters. The difference was well documented as early as the 1840s by the “American school” of anthropology, which included Samuel G. Morton, Josiah C. Nott, and George R. Glidden. It was corroborated from the 1860s to the 1890s by European anthropologists, such as Paul Broca and Paul Topinard in France, who compared Blacks and Whites from Africa and Europe. Broca (1873) wrote: “West Africans have a cranial capacity about 100 cm³ less than the European races.”

The data on race differences in brain size were so widely known that Charles Darwin (1871) was able to cite them as evidence in favor of his then controversial theory of human evolution in *The Descent of Man*. Even Franz Boas, who is often described as the “real” founder of American anthropology and the first to challenge “Eurocentric racism,” added further knowledge about brain size and race by emphasizing the amount of overlap in the distributions. On a visit to England in 1889, Boas had become acquainted with Sir Francis

Galton's work on biometrics and, in his 1894 article "Human Faculty Determined by Race," pointed out that Topinard's measurements revealed that 27 percent of Blacks exceeded the White average. His inference: "We might, therefore, anticipate a lack of men of high genius (among Blacks)." And, he wrote, "It would seem that the greater the central nervous system, the higher the faculty of the race and the greater its aptitude to mental development."

In 1910, Boas again acknowledged that the "average" Black brain was "smaller than that of other races." Remarkably, Boas published this in *Crisis*, the organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Boas wrote "We may, therefore, expect less average ability and also, on account of probable anatomical differences, somewhat different mental tendencies." These early works were enlarged in his 1911 book, *The Mind of Primitive Man*.

To the modern eye it is astounding to see these data discussed so openly, and from scientists with such diverse viewpoints. Some were sympathetic to slavery (Nott and Glidden), some were anti-evolutionists (Morton), others in favor of evolution (Broca, Topinard), and some avowedly pro-Black and anti-racist (Boas). Unfortunately, today, the data can scarcely be mentioned in polite society, or even at scientific meetings.

In recent times, what I have dubbed the "hermeneuticist" perspective has so come to dominate anthropology that it has effectively removed the topic from the social scientific radar screen. Hermeneuticists approach race, brain size, and IQ, as epiphenomena, mere social constructions (Rushton, 1997c). They argue that political, economic, and even linguistic forces are the real causal agents that have created the concepts of "race" and "IQ" and deemed them worthy of study. Rather than research race, hermeneuticists research those who do. The current popularity of the hermeneuticist position might best be demonstrated using some vivid examples.

Deconstructing Race

"Race is a fiction, Racism is real" proclaimed the August 1998 placards on the Metro buses of Washington, D.C. The D.C. government is not alone in spending taxpayers money in the crusade against race. A 1995 campaign against racism by the British