
Report

The New Enemies of Evolutionary Science

by J. Philippe Rushton

The decencies and pieties of the age are at war with the pursuit of truth.

On January 19, 1989, in the Sausalito Room of the San Francisco Hilton Hotel, my life changed forever. I stood before a lectern speaking to a symposium of scientists belonging to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The title of the brief paper I proceeded to present to the meeting was "Evolutionary Biology and Heritable Traits (With Reference to Oriental-White-Black Differences)."

I reviewed the international literature recently published in academic peer-reviewed journals. I summarized data about traits like brain size, temperament, speed of maturation, family structure, and reproductive variables. I tentatively concluded, roughly speaking, that East Asians, on average, were slower to mature, less fertile, less sexually active, with larger brains and higher IQ scores than Africans, who tended to the opposite in each of these areas. Whites, I found, fell between the other two groups.

I further contended that this orderly tri-level hierarchy of races in average tendency had its roots not only in economic, cultural, familial, and other environmental forces but also, to a far greater extent than mainstream social science would suggest, in ancient, gene-mediated evolutionary ones. Heredity, or nature — to use the term popularized by Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's younger cousin — was every bit as important as environment or nurture, often more so.

To account for the racial pattern in brain size and the other "life-history variables," I proposed a gene-based life-history theory familiar to evolutionary biologists as the r-K scale of reproductive strategy. At one end of this scale are r-strategies, which emphasize high reproductive rates, and, at the other, K-strategies, which emphasize high levels of parental investment. This scale is generally used to compare the life histories of widely disparate species but I used it to describe the immensely smaller variations within the human species. I hypothesized that Mongoloid people are, on average, more K-selected than Caucasoids, who in turn are more

K-selected than Negroids.

I also mapped this theory onto human evolution. Molecular genetic evidence shows that modern humans evolved in Africa sometime after 200,000 years ago, with an African/non-African split occurring about 110,000 years ago, and a Mongoloid/Caucasoid split about 41,000 years ago. The farther north the populations migrated, "out of Africa," the more they encountered the cognitively demanding problems of gathering and storing food, gaining shelter, making clothes, and raising children successfully during prolonged winters. As these populations evolved into present-day Europeans and East Asians, they did so by shifting toward larger brains, slower rates of maturation, and lower levels of sex hormone with concomitant reductions in sexual potency and aggression and increases in family stability and longevity.

I did not claim to have established the truth of these hypotheses. They may never be established in their entirety. But if they, or any part of them, or even any parallel hypotheses were eventually confirmed, we would have an explanation of why the measured traits are statistically distributed among racial groups in the distinct patterns evident in the data I had examined. The theories provided testable hypotheses and consequently complied with two fundamental goals of any science: the search to provide causal explanations of phenomena, and the search to unify separate fields of thought. These powerful incentives pulled me forward.

I emphasized two caveats in my presentation before the