



Racial Stupidity and Malevolence

Recently, I spoke with a Midwestern university engineering professor who was trying to help an inner-city black student who was admitted to the university's electrical engineering program. The student was sure that he was well prepared for an engineering curriculum; his high school had convinced him of that and the university recruiters supported that notion. His poor performance on the university's math placement exam required that he take remedial math courses. He's failed them and is now on academic probation after two semesters of earning less than a 2.0 grade point average.



The young man and his parents were sure of his preparedness. After all, he had good high school grades, but those grades meant only that he was well behaved. The college recruiters probably knew this youngster didn't have the academic preparation for an electrical engineering curriculum. They were more concerned with racial diversity.

This young man's background is far from unique. Public schools give most black students fraudulent diplomas that certify a 12th-grade achievement level. According to a report by Abigail Thernstrom, "The Racial Gap in Academic Achievement," black students in 12th grade dealt with scientific problems at the level of whites in the sixth grade; they wrote about as well as whites in the eighth grade. The average black high school senior had math skills on a par with a typical white student in the middle of ninth grade. The average 17-year-old black student could read only as well as the typical white child who had not yet reached age 13.

Black youngsters who take the SAT exam earn an average score that's 70 to 80 percent of the score of white students, and keep in mind, the achievement level of white students is nothing to write home about. Under misguided diversity pressures, colleges recruit many black students who are academically ill equipped. Very often, these students become quickly disillusioned, embarrassed and flunk out, or they're steered into curricula that have little or no academic content, or professors practice affirmative-action grading. In any case, the 12 years of poor academic preparation is not repaired in four or five years of college. This is seen by the huge performance gap between blacks and whites on exams for graduate school admittance such as the GRE, MCAT and LSAT.

Is poor academic performance among blacks something immutable or pre-ordained? There is no evidence for such a claim. Let's sample some evidence from earlier periods. In "Assumptions Versus History in Ethnic Education," in *Teachers College Record* (1981), Dr. Thomas Sowell reports on academic achievement in some of New York city's public schools. He compares test scores for sixth graders in Harlem schools with those in the predominantly white Lower East Side for April 1941 and December 1941.

In paragraph and word meaning, Harlem students, compared to Lower East Side students, scored



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equally or higher. In 1947 and 1951, Harlem third-graders in paragraph and word meaning, and arithmetic reasoning and computation scored about the same as — and in some cases, slightly higher, and in others, slightly lower than — their white Lower East Side counterparts.

Going back to an earlier era, Washington, D.C.'s Dunbar High School's black students scored higher in citywide tests than any of the city's white schools. In fact, from its founding in 1870 to 1955, most of Dunbar's graduates went off to college.

Let's return to the tale of the youngster at the Midwestern college. Recruiting this youngster to be a failure is cruel, psychologically damaging and an embarrassment for his family. But the campus hustlers might come to the aid of the student by convincing him that his academic failure is a result of white racism and Eurocentric values.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University.

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