

The Dilemma of Changing IQ outcomes
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We used to think that IQ (Intelligence Quotient) was something that we were born with. Some of us were bright, some not so bright. Over the decades since IQ was first tested, we can no longer assume that IQ is a fixed genetic talent. IQ can be stimulated to increase or can be damaged into decline (or failure to develop), both the consequences of human behavior.

Although this finding gives us a heads up of what seems to be a evolutionary increase in brain functioning, according to James R. Flynn (the Flynn Effect, a study now widely accepted by scientists), we need to remember that there is still a mystery of how certain rare people in history had genius IQs, although nothing in their diets or environments gave them an advantage over their peers. Socrates, Bacon, Shakespeare, and Bach, were just a few.

However, looking at our world today, we can see (and can test) this hypothesis of generally increasing IQs. It is a bit of a shock to learn that the average American IQ in 1900 was 67, which today would be mentally handicapped. We can also test for those human behaviors that diminish IQs, something that human beings have always observed.

We have always known that urban life stimulates the brain and that, by and large, city dwellers are much sharper than those living as subsistence farm peasants. This becomes evident when hordes of country folk pour into cities because there rural life no longer feeds them. Even in the 19th and early 20th century United States, there were jokes about \223country bumpkins\224 and \223city slickers,\224 the fuel for much humor in our early movies.

Despite the jokes, army recruiters actually found that too many lower class and rural young men (particularly true in England) during World War I were stunted physically and mentally. In England, the class differences in size, mental ability, and general health were not only obvious, but were instrumental in the scorn that the well off felt for the poor.

Throughout history until today, the vast majority of human beings lived in rural areas and a number of factors affected their mental development. The worse the agriculture (deficits of good soil, rainfall, and choice or availability of crops) the worse the IQ outcome. In addition, cultures that for religious or other reasons treated and still treat women as farm animals affected the IQs of females and often of the children they bore, particularly the girl children.

Genetic practices also played a role. We know that in the 19th century in particular, marriages among European royalty often involved close cousins and there were some dreadful consequences, such as the hemophilia of the Russian Tsar\222s heir.

There has always been a genetic problem in the Muslim world with the decided preference of first cousin marriages, a practice that runs from villages and tribal life to aristocrats. The aristocrats, however, had two mitigating factors: polygamy, which provided for offspring not from too closely related parents, but also from better diet and more stimulating life. The exception here was that there was very little stimulation in the lives of upper class harem women, and they were infamously simple. This simplicity is marked even more so among village and tribal women, most of whom are undernourished and start childbearing far too young.

The consequences of this IQ disparity can be seen today in the growth of mega-cities in the lesser-developed world. Once well-functioning cities have grown to catastrophic size, inundated by villagers fleeing the hopeless countryside. In Africa and India, for example, these migrants must resign themselves to work that can destroy their immune systems (sorting through mountains of garbage, dismantling ships, working in environmentally poisonous factories), as well as diminishing IQ already diminished by rural living.

Conflict between these groups and those with increasing IQ outcomes (the well fed, educated, and not the results of cousin marriages) are growing. When Afghan religious fanatics deliberately murder girls going to school or Pakistanis murder women administering polio inoculations, the consequences of diminishing IQ becomes apparent. They have the culture they deserve.

681 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of *Ten Inventions that Changed Everything*. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.