

# COMMENT

## Behavior and Heredity

The posthumous Thorndike Award article by Burt (1972) draws psychological attention again to the great influence played by heredity in important human behaviors. Recently, to emphasize such influence has required considerable courage, for it has brought psychologists and other scientists under extreme personal and professional abuse at Harvard, Berkeley, Stanford, Connecticut, Illinois, and elsewhere. Yet such influences are well documented. To assert their importance and validity, and to call for free and unencumbered research, the 50 scientists listed below have signed the following document, and submit it to the APA:

**Background:** The history of civilization shows many periods when scientific research or teaching was censored, punished, or suppressed for nonscientific reasons, usually for seeming to contradict some religious or political belief. Well-known scientist victims include: Galileo, in orthodox Italy; Darwin, in Victorian England; Einstein, in Hitler's Germany; and Mendelian biologists, in Stalin's Russia.

Today, a similar suppression, censure, punishment, and defamation are being applied against scientists who emphasize the role of heredity in human behavior. Published positions are often misquoted and misrepresented; emotional appeals replace scientific reasoning; arguments are directed against the man rather than against the evidence (e.g., a scientist is called "fascist," and his arguments are ignored).

A large number of attacks come from nonscientists, or even antiscientists, among the political militants on campus. Other attackers include academics committed to environmentalism in their explanation of almost all human differences. And a large number of scientists, who have studied the evidence and are persuaded of the great role played by heredity in human behavior, are silent, neither expressing their beliefs clearly in public, nor rallying strongly to the defense of their more outspoken colleagues.

The results are seen in the present academy: it is virtually heresy to express a hereditarian view, or to recommend further study of the biological bases of behavior. A kind of orthodox environmentalism dominates the liberal academy, and strongly inhibits teachers, researchers, and scholars from turning to biological explanations or efforts.

**Resolution:** Now, therefore, we the undersigned scientists from a variety of fields, declare the following beliefs and principles:

1. We have investigated much evidence concerning the possible role of inheritance in human abilities and behav-

iors, and we believe such hereditary influences are very strong.

2. We wish strongly to encourage research into the biological hereditary bases of behavior, as a major complement to the environmental efforts at explanation.

3. We strongly defend the right, and emphasize the scholarly duty, of the teacher to discuss hereditary influences on behavior, in appropriate settings and with responsible scholarship.

4. We deplore the evasion of hereditary reasoning in current textbooks, and the failure to give responsible weight to heredity in disciplines such as sociology, social psychology, social anthropology, educational psychology, psychological measurement, and many others.

5. We call upon liberal academics—upon faculty senates, upon professional and learned societies, upon the American Association of University Professors, upon the American Civil Liberties Union, upon the University Centers for Rational Alternatives, upon presidents and boards of trustees, upon departments of science, and upon the editors of scholarly journals—to insist upon the openness of social science to the well-grounded claims of biobehavioral reasoning, and to protect vigilantly any qualified faculty members who responsibly teach, research, or publish concerning such reasoning.

We so urge because as scientists we believe that human problems may best be remedied by increased human knowledge, and that such increases in knowledge lead much more probably to the enhancement of human happiness than to the opposite.

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#### REFERENCE

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#### The "Entertainment Factor" in Theorizing

Singer (1971), in his article, "briefly presents the major areas of interaction between psychology, science, and philosophy of science . . . [and] an outline of empirical questions relating to the psychology of the scientist [p. 1010]." However, he failed to go into the area of psychological gains—the satisfactions the theorist receives in his work. This might be called the "entertainment factor" in theorizing. Although, in general, psychologists and philosophers have neglected the importance of this, some have given it some attention, for example, Koestler (1964) and Polanyi (1958).

<sup>1</sup> In Item 1, preferred "substantial" or "important" to the wording "very strong."