utilization patterns in service delivery by Daschle, Cohen, and Rice (p. 267). In discussing unnecessary or unwise health services utilization, they suggested comparing such users with those "[on] the other end of the curve—those whose outcomes are better" in order to receive instruction on more economical service utilization. These authors are apparently misinformed on the distribution curve nature of utilization of health services.

Most research bearing on health and mental health delivery systems has noted the presence of a negatively accelerating, declining "decay" curve with known empirical—statistical parameters (Phillips, 1985, 1987, 1988; Walberg, Strykowski, Rovai, & Hung, 1984). Walberg et al. have noted similar curves in biology, psychology, and sociology, where the so-called decay curves "right or [have noted] positive skew distributions in which low or null occurrences are most frequent and high performance is rare" (p. 87). In psychotherapy and medicine, respectively, the decay curve describes attrition from treatment or noncompliance with aspects of treatment. Walberg et al. (1984) observed that the 'normal' distribution often will be a very poor model of reality leading to misguided educational theories, inferences, policies, and practices (p. 88).

The bell-shaped, normal curve has two asymptotes; the decay or positive skew curve has one. This curve has been elaborated into a total "service delivery system" curve, following from attributional and noncompliance data on a large variety of health-related services (see Walberg et al., 1984; Phillips, 1985, 1987, 1988).

Presumably improved planning for and utilization of all health-related services will be better served if the correct nature of their distributions and resultant curves are fully recognized and taken into account from the inception of all data collection and all outcome evaluation studies.

REFERENCES


No More Than Skin Deep

David C. Rowe
School of Family and Consumer Resources
University of Arizona

Helms's (September 1992) article claiming that racial differences in IQ performance are culturally biased postulated all kinds of cultural differences between American Whites and Blacks. She cited Heath (1989) to suggest that Blacks are "socialized in Black communities to develop spontaneous, creative, interactive, and expansive thinking [and that]. . . . it is difficult for them to reconcile the contrasting socially oriented worldviews of their communities with the ascetic Eurocentric view that prescribes the 'same assumption'" (p. 1097). Despite a greater familiarity of Black children with MTV and baseball's world series than with Senegalese or Kenyan customs, Helms imagined that these children possess all kinds of "African-centered" values (e.g., "immaterial forces over linear thinking, personal conduct through movement, time measured by customs") (p. 1096). One is left with an impression that people of black skin are culturally, cognitively, and socially different from people of white skin.

Nevertheless, IQ tests appear to measure the same psychological attribute in American Whites and Blacks (Jensen, 1980). The statistical regression lines relating IQ with later college grades or job performance, according to many studies, are nearly identical across racial groups (Cole, 1981; Jensen, 1980; Schmidt & Hunter, 1981). In cases of slightly unequal IQ regression lines (in large samples), the White line usually overpredicts Black performance on outcome criteria to a small degree. Thus, if an IQ of 90 predicts a course grade of C-, then this predicted grade would apply for an American Black or White child, regardless of whether one child was raised in poverty in a city and the other in affluence in a middle-class suburb. Furthermore, IQ almost never underestimates (at least over the short term) the intellectual performance of a Black child (Cole, 1981). Other psychometric findings also support the "same attribute" conclusion (e.g., equal rank orders of IQ item difficulties across racial groups; Jensen, 1980).

In her article, Helms failed to come to grips with these observations: If Black intelligence is somehow different from White intelligence, how could these data patterns be obtained? If IQ measures Eurocentric and not Afrocentric "g," then how does it hold the same network of correlates in Black and White groups? Just because in America in the 1990s fewer Blacks than Whites score above IQ 100 does not mean that Black and White thought processes are dissimilar (nor does it imply that IQ tests measure the sum total of intelligent behavior in either Blacks or Whites).

Basic similarity of thought can also be seen in more molecular analyses of behavior. All children advance through the early Piagetian stages of thought at approximately the same rate. Black children, like White ones, discover that objects are permanent and that quantities are conserved. Consider that African Black children and American White children learn mental addition in elementary schools. When they do, they develop similar problem-solving strategies and make similar mental errors (Ginsburg, Posner, & Russell, 1981). Would we really expect the serial position effect in memory to be reversed in one ethnic or racial group—so that items in the middle of a list are recalled more easily than early or late items? Dissimilarity of skin color is no guide to how people reason and think.

Racial and ethnic similarity may extend to domains of psychological development beyond IQ, such as to the development of behavioral deviance. The IQ regression results mentioned above show that 2 x 2 covariance matrices (say IQ, grades) are equal in Blacks and Whites. With two colleagues I found that much larger covariance matrices (approximately 10 x 10) consisting of psychosocial influence and outcome variables were also equal across ethnic and racial groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Whites; Rowe, Vazsonyi, & Flannery, in press). Our findings imply that many psychosocial influences operate in different ethnic and racial populations in quantitatively the same way.

Helms also presented misleading genetic information. She advocated the controversial idea that the ancient Egyptians were racially the same as sub-Saharan Africans. Her view is rejected by many physical anthropologists and historians. She confused the concept of genetic recession with that of Genotype x Environment Interaction. Furthermore, she failed to appreciate the degree of racial similarity of genetic composition. According to Lewontin (1982), approximately 85% of genetic variability is found "between people within a nation or tribe" (p. 123), whereas approximately 6% is "between races" (p. 123). True, if some genes affecting behavior have racial prevalence differences, such as genes affecting skin color, then they could contribute to average behavioral differences among racial groups—but they could not redesign pan-Homo sapiens's emotional and cognitive adaptations represented in the functioning of the nervous system.
The psychological similarity of Americans of different ethnic and racial groups is supported by (a) sharing many features of a common American culture, to which all ethnic and racial groups have contributed, and (b) sharing our species' genetic blueprint. Nonetheless, I endorse Helms' and Betancourt and Lopez's (1993) calls for adequately defining culture and attempting to quantify the amount of relevant culture to which Black and White individuals are exposed. More generally, by using measured biological, psychosocial, and cultural variables in research, it may be possible to identify the sources of ethnic and racial (to the extent they exist) differences. We may find basic developmental similarities, even when mean level differences exist among ethnic or racial groups. For example, the regression of maternal drug use on low birth weights may be similar in different ethnic groups. If so, average group differences may arise from different prevalences of drug abuse (see Vega, Called, Hwang, & Noble, 1993). As implied by my title, ethnic and racial differences may be "no more than skin deep" because physical dissimilarities lead to false attributions of psychological difference, when in reality people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds are broadly psychologically alike.

REFERENCES


Rowe, D. C., Vazsonyi, A. T., & Flannery, D. J. (in press). No more than skin deep: Ethnic and racial similarity in developmental process. Psychological Review.
