

A MINORITY VIEW

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ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM AT HARVARD

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Dr. Larry Summers, Harvard's president, remains under siege for remarks (www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2005/nber.html) made in his Jan. 14 address to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Dr. Summers suggested that there might be three major reasons why women are underrepresented in the higher reaches of science and ranked them in order of importance.

First is what Dr. Summers calls the "high-powered job hypothesis," where success demands putting in 80-hour weeks, and men are more willing or capable to do so. In support of how marriage and family impact women's careers, he added that when one does see women in the higher reaches of science, they tend to be unmarried or have no children.

Dr. Summers' second hypothesis is that there are sex differences in IQ and aptitude at the high end, and his third is that socialization and discrimination might explain some of the underrepresentation.

It's Dr. Summers' second hypothesis that caused MIT biologist Dr. Nancy Hopkins to leave the lecture, explaining to a Boston Globe (Jan. 17, 2005) reporter that, "I would've either blacked out or thrown up." Previous temper tantrums served Dr. Hopkins well as reported in the Women's Freedom Network Newsletter (Jan./Feb. 2000), "MIT Tarnishes Its Reputation with Junk Gender Science," by Judith Kleinfeld. After claiming sex discrimination, "Professor Hopkins received an endowed chair, a 20 percent salary increase, \$2.5 million of research funds from internal MIT sources, a 5,000 square foot laboratory, an invitation to join the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, and an invitation to the White House where president and Mrs. Clinton praised her courage and expressed the hope that other institutions would follow the MIT example."

Virtually all academic literature on sex, IQ and aptitude reach the conclusion that there are differences between men and women. While the mean intelligence between men and women is similar, the variance differs significantly. Women cluster more about the mean while men are more spread out. That means fewer women, relative to men, are at both the low end and the high end of the intelligence and aptitude spectrum. That might partially explain why so many men are in jail compared to women, and why more geniuses like Mozart and Einstein are men. On last year's SAT math test, more than twice as many boys as girls scored in the top range (750-800).

The only debate among scholars isn't whether these patterns exist but whether they reflect

acculturation or genetics. A substantial body of work suggests genetics. The fact of business is that we do differ genetically by race and sex, not only in intelligence and aptitude, but in physical ways as well.

Why in the world would we deny these differences, and deny their effects on observed outcomes, particularly in an academic setting where there's supposed to be open inquiry? I think we do so for a couple of foolish reasons. First, most of us share the value of equality before the law. We falsely believe that equality before the law requires that we must in fact be equal. In my book, being a human being is the only condition for equality before the law. The second reason has to do with human arrogance. If a particular outcome is deemed undesirable and it's genetically determined, our hands are tied and we just have to accept it.

Dr. Summers has responded to the criticism created by his NBER remarks with serial mea culpas, groveling and apologies. He's in deep trouble. Faculty members don't differ that much from chickens in a barnyard. The sight of the boss chicken bleeding is all that's needed for the vicious pecking to commence.

If there's a legitimate criticism that can be made about Dr. Summers' NBER comments, it's that he didn't exercise discretion. There are certain things best left unsaid in front of children. Children have little understanding and can be easily offended by unvarnished truths.

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