

IQ and Skin Color: The Old World Reexamined and the New World

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The primary purpose of the present research is to compare two measures of skin color. The Templer & Arikawa (2006) research reported a country-level correlation of $-.92$ between (darker) skin color and IQ, using a measure of skin color derived from a skin color map in the physical anthropology textbook of Biasutti (1967). Meisenberg (2004) reported a country-level correlation of $.89$ between IQ and skin reflectance (proportion of incoming light that is reflected from the skin, greater with lighter skin), based on skin reflectance data compiled by Jablonski & Chaplin (2000). The present study found a correlation of $-.96$ between the two measures of skin color, indicating very good reliability of the skin color measures. The validity of these two independent measures of skin color is supported by correlations of $.88$ and $.84$ with latitude. Both skin color measures correlated $.91$ with IQ.

The second objective of the research was the extension of the Templer & Arikawa (2006) Old World findings to 18 regions of the New World. Darker skin color correlated $-.60$ with measured IQ and $-.97$ with IQ as predicted from Old World countries with identical skin color. These results show that the country-level correlation between average IQ and average skin color is found worldwide.

Key Words: Skin color; Intelligence; Evolution.

Introduction

The present study expands on the earlier study of Templer & Arikawa (2006), which found that skin color correlated $-.92$ with the mean national IQ of 129 countries across Africa, Asia, and Europe. It should be borne in mind that these countries were regarded by Templer and Arikawa as having “indigenous” populations that had been present before the voyages of Christopher Columbus. In the present research, they are called “Old World” countries. This correlation was considerably higher than the correlations of

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IQ with winter high ($r = .76$), winter low ($r = -.66$), summer high ($r = -.31$), summer low ($r = -.40$), and per capita income ($r = .63$). Jensen (2006) suggested the correlation of $-.92$ could be the result of pleiotropy, that is, a single gene having two or more different phenotypic effects.

The earlier research by Templer & Arikawa (2006) was based upon the arguments of Lynn (1991) and Rushton (1995) that colder climates selected for higher intelligence because of the greater cognitive requirements for obtaining food and protection from the elements. Templer and Arikawa conceptualized skin color as a multigenerational adaptation to the climates one's ancestors have lived in for thousands of years.

Templer & Arikawa (2006) employed Lynn & Vanhanen's (2002) tabulation of mean IQs of nations based on IQ tests. Measured IQs were available for 55 countries, and for 74 additional countries the mean IQ was estimated based on the IQs of neighboring countries. Although Templer and Arikawa reported very similar findings for the calculated and estimated countries, Hunt & Sternberg (2006) questioned the legitimacy of estimated IQs. This concern seemed not unreasonable at the time. In response, however, Lynn & Vanhanen (2006) reported a correlation of $.91$ between the mean estimated IQs of 25 countries in Lynn & Vanhanen (2002) and their mean measured IQs that had been subsequently determined. The IQs used in the present paper are based on Lynn and Vanhanen's updated and expanded 2006 tabulation, with additions and amendments as reported in Lynn (2010).

The skin color measure employed by Templer & Arikawa (2006) was based on a world map in a classic physical anthropology text (Biasutti, 1967) in which skin color was scored from 1 = very light to 8 = very dark. Since the skin color map did not present national boundaries, Templer and Arikawa had three graduate students, who were not told of the purpose of the research, independently specify the predominant skin color for each of the 129 countries. The three ratings intercorrelated $.95$, $.95$, and $.93$. (One graduate student lived about 2,000 km from the other two.)

The correlation of the mean of the three raters with winter temperature of $.85$ argues for the soundness of the

skin color map and therefore the validity of using it. Nevertheless, Hunt & Sternberg (2006) stressed the subjectivity of the ratings and suggested that the similarity in the students' perceptions might be based on sharing stereotypes that include "the same implicit theories, prejudices, erroneous perceptions, or whatever" (p. 132). Although Templer & Arikawa (2006) argued that the raters' task was a simple clerical one, in fairness to the criticism it should be pointed out that there were a number of skin color disagreements. In none of the 129 countries did the raters diverge by more than one skin category score. However, for 41 (32%) of the ratings, one of the raters differed from the other two (e.g., one rater specified "4" and two specified "3").

The most important purpose of the major part of the present study was the comparison of two measures of skin color. One was the measure used by Templer & Arikawa (2006) based on the anthropological textbook of Biasutti (1967), in which darker skin color was given a higher number. The other was used by Meisenberg (2004) and based on a set of skin reflectance data at a wavelength of 685 nanometers (greater with lighter skin) compiled by Jablonski & Chaplin (2000). Skin reflectance is the percentage of light that is reflected from the skin. Theoretically, these measures of skin color should correlate -1.00. The more the obtained correlation deviates from -1.00, the greater the error in one or the other measure, or both. If either measure has no validity, the correlation should be non-significant, theoretically .00.

Jablonski & Chaplin's research on the evolution of human skin coloration described the advantages and disadvantages of dark versus light skin. Lighter skin, that is skin with a lesser degree of melanin pigmentation, permits greater penetration of ultraviolet rays and thus allows greater synthesis of vitamin D in the skin. Darker pigmentation protects against sunburn and skin cancer (Fitzpatrick, 1965). In the study of Meisenberg (2004), the correlation between mean national IQ and skin reflectance was reported as .89, which is very close to the -.92 reported by Templer & Arikawa (2006).

The present study also includes latitude as another

climate related variable to increase the comprehensiveness of the research. It was predicted that greater absolute latitude (distance from the equator) would be positively correlated with IQ. Meisenberg (2003) previously reported a correlation of .76 between latitude and IQ. Beals et al. (1984) reported a correlation of .64 between latitude and cranial capacity.

The present research also contains a secondary study of lesser scope on the relationship between IQ and skin color of the indigenous people of the “New World.” The previous research correlating these two variables was with the “Old World” countries of Africa, Asia and Europe. The “New World” districts and countries as contained in Table 6 are primarily in North America, Central America, South America, Australia, and Pacific islands not regarded as Old World by Templer & Arikawa (2006). Templer and Arikawa included Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia as “Old World” countries.

Method

The same 127 countries analyzed by both Meisenberg (2004) and Templer & Arikawa (2006) were used in the present study. The mean IQs of Lynn & Vanhanen (2006) were used with the recent amendments summarized in Lynn (2010). A second IQ compilation deleted the sub-Saharan African countries from the Lynn & Vanhanen (2006) compilation. This was done because it is apparent that the countries of tropical Africa are at the far ends of the distributions for IQ, skin color, and skin reflectance. It was anticipated that the correlations would be lower because of smaller variance. Also, the validity of even “culture fair” tests with Black Africans has been questioned (Wicherts et al., 2010). Furthermore, because of limited resources and logistical problems, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which the Black African samples that were used in the IQ studies were representative for their countries (Lynn & Meisenberg, 2010).

Absolute latitude was determined for each country from the *Complete Atlas of the World* (2007) and was recorded to the nearest tenth of a degree of the largest city from the equator. For example, if the latitude is 20° 30' the distance recorded was 20.5. The same skin color index employed by

Templer & Arikawa (2006) was employed in the present research. The skin reflectance values employed were those of Meisenberg (2004). He used the percentage reflectance at 685 nanometers reported by Jablonski & Chaplin (2000) for 37 countries, and used extrapolation for the other 93 countries. The Jablonski & Chaplin reflectance measure was based on the average of many studies listed in their appendix.

For the New World research, the mean IQs reported in Lynn & Vanhanen (2006) were employed. For the skin color ratings, two university librarians were chosen because of presumed familiarity with maps. They were provided with the skin color map of Biasutti (1967) and given the following instructions:

“Please give the predominant skin color (that could be as low as 1 and as high as 8) for the indigenous people of the following countries and areas. Use the skin color map and the map(s) of your choice that delineate the boundaries of the countries.” Both librarians gave identical skin color ratings. These ratings are contained in Table 6.

In addition to tabulating the mean IQs of the New World countries provided by Lynn & Vanhanen (2006), the mean IQs of these countries were predicted from the mean IQs of Old World countries with identical skin colors. This procedure was carried out for two reasons. First, most of Lynn’s New World IQs are based on fewer studies than his Old World IQs. The second reason is that a significant correlation based on countries thousands of kilometers away would support the robustness and range of generalization of the relationship between IQ and skin color. For the New World countries both the IQs and skin colors used are for the indigenous populations.

Results

Old World Results

Table 1 contains the means of the IQs, skin reflectance, and latitude for all 127 “Old World” countries. Table 2 lists the means and standard deviations for all variables. Table 3 presents the product-moment correlation coefficients between all seven climate-related variables. The most salient correlation is that of -.96 between skin color as listed by the classic anthropology map and skin reflectance. Table 4 gives

the product-moment correlation coefficients between the climate-related variables and the Lynn & Vanhanen (2006) IQs, both for all 127 countries and for the 92 countries outside sub-Saharan Africa. The correlations of skin color and skin reflectance are of very similar magnitude. Table 5 gives the correlational matrix of all variables, with both calculated and extrapolated reflectance. The very similar correlations provide credibility to the extrapolation method of Meisenberg (2004). It is especially noteworthy that for both the measured and the extrapolated countries, the correlation between skin color and skin reflectance is -.96.

New World Results

Table 6 contains the skin color ratings of the librarians for the 18 New World regions, the IQs for these regions contained in Lynn & Vanhanen (2006), and the IQs predicted from IQs in Old World countries with identical skin color.

The New World regions with a skin color of 1 were predicted to have an IQ of 99, based on the mean of the 19 Old World countries with that skin color value. The New World regions with a skin color of 2 were predicted to have an IQ of 96 (the mean of the 21 Old World countries with that skin color). The New World regions with a skin color of 3 were predicted to have an IQ of 87 (the mean of the seven Old World countries with that skin color). The New World regions with a skin color of 4 were predicted to have an IQ of 84 (the mean of the nine Old World countries with that skin color). The New World regions with a skin color of 5 were predicted to have an IQ of 82 (the mean of the four Old World countries with that skin color). The three New World regions with a skin color of 6 were predicted to have an IQ of 72 (the mean IQ of the five Old World countries with that skin color). Finally, the one New World region with a skin color of 7 was predicted to have an IQ of 69 (the mean of the 22 Old World countries with that skin color).

Skin color in the New World had a mean of 3.78 and a standard deviation of 1.83. Measured IQs had a mean of 85.33 and a standard deviation of 8.17. Predicted IQ had a mean of 85.38 and a standard deviation of 9.54. The product-moment correlation coefficients are -.60 ($p < .01$) between skin color and measured IQ, -.97 ($p < .001$)

between skin color and predicted IQ, and .64 ($p < .001$) between measured and predicted IQ.

Discussion

The correlation of -.96 between the Meisenberg (2004) and Templer & Arikawa (2006) measures of skin color provides very strong support for the accuracy of both measures. The two measures were derived independently from different data sets. This high correlation shows that with all the vagaries of the primary data (extrapolations from the Jablonski data set, possible errors of textbook writers, and disagreements between raters about the skin color map), there is the expected high correlation. This conclusively refutes the Hunt & Sternberg (2006) criticism that the skin color data of Templer and Arikawa are unreliable. The validity of the measures is further demonstrated by their rather high correlation with latitude.

The present findings also strengthen the relation between climate-related variables consistent with the arguments of Lynn & Vanhanen (2006) and Rushton (1995). The Templer & Arikawa (2006) study showed substantial correlations of IQ with both skin color and temperature. The correlation of IQ in the present study with reflectance and with latitude provides converging lines of evidence. A reasonable question is why does IQ correlate with skin color more highly than with climatic variables? It should be borne in mind that Templer and Arikawa conceptualized skin color as an evolved adaptation to the climates that one's ancestors have lived in for thousands of years. Migration is capable of transplanting the coevolved traits of intelligence and skin color to different geographic latitudes. The greater magnitude of the correlation between IQ and skin color relative to the IQ-latitude correlation indicates that it is the climate one's ancestors lived in, not the current climate in which children grow up, which is more closely related to IQ.

The findings in this paper have importance for Rushton's (1995) Differential K theory of the evolution of human life histories. Skin color appears to be an excellent index of the *r*-K continuum. Templer (2008) found that (darker) skin color not only correlated -.91 with IQ but correlated .85 with birth rate, -.84 with life expectancy, .71

with infant mortality, and .53 with HIV/AIDS rate across 127 countries. A single r - K factor accounted for 75% of the variance. Rushton contends that individuals and groups with more K characteristics tend to have higher IQ test scores, to be less sexually active and fertile, to provide better care of their offspring, and to have greater life expectancy. The Rushton contention that the r - K constellation of variables is more biologically than socially based is supported by the Templer & Arikawa (2006) finding that the correlation of .92 between IQ and skin color is significantly higher than the correlation between IQ and per capita income of .63.

The negative correlations between IQ and skin color in the New World extend the range of applicability of the skin color-IQ relationship. Five of the New World regions have only one mean IQ and four are based on only two studies. The Old World estimates were based on between 4 and 22 countries with identical skin colors. The use of skin color in distant parts of the world to predict IQ in countries and regions thousands of kilometers away implies the robustness and importance of the relationship between these two variables. The fact that two independent skin color measures, each having limitations, correlated very highly with each other and with IQ provides convergent evidence of validity.

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Table 1 IQs, skin color, skin reflectance, and latitude for the 127 “Old World” countries. IQs in parentheses have been estimated.

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Afghanistan	3.00	(84)	55.7	34.5
Albania	1.67	(90)	63.0	41.3
Algeria	4.33	(83)	58.0	36.8
Angola	7.00	(68)	27.0	8.8
Armenia	1.67	92	61.0	40.1
Austria	1.00	98	66.0	48.2
Azerbaijan	2.00	(87)	61.0	40.4
Bahrain	4.00	81	55.0	26.6
Bangladesh	4.33	81	49.0	13.7
Belarus	1.33	(97)	66.0	53.9
Belgium	1.00	99	67.0	51.2

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Benin	7.00	(70)	28.0	6.4
Bhutan	3.00	(80)	51.1	27.5
Botswana	7.00	71	24.0	24.7
Brunei	4.00	(91)	52.0	4.9
Bulgaria	1.67	93	63.0	42.7
Burkina Faso	7.67	(68)	28.6	12.3
Burma	3.00	(87)	55.0	16.7
Burundi	7.00	(69)	29.5	12.3
Cambodia	5.00	(91)	54.0	11.5
Cameroon	7.00	64	21.9	3.9
Central African R.	7.33	64	27.0	4.4
Chad	7.00	(68)	24.6	12.2
China	2.00	105	59.9	31.2
Congo (Brazzaville)	6.67	65	31.6	4.2
Congo (Zaire)	7.00	64	31.6	4.4
Cote d'Ivoire	6.33	69	29.0	5.0
Croatia	2.00	99	65.0	45.8
Cyprus	2.00	(91)	60.0	35.2

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Czech Republic	1.33	98	67.0	50.1
Denmark	1.00	98	68.0	55.7
Djibouti	6.00	(68)	36.0	11.5
Egypt	4.00	83	52.0	30.0
Equatorial Guinea	6.00	64	31.6	1.0
Eritrea	6.33	(68)	36.0	15.3
Estonia	1.00	99	68.0	59.5
Ethiopia	6.67	69	32.6	9.0
Finland	1.00	99	68.0	60.2
France	1.00	98	65.0	48.9
Gabon	7.00	(64)	31.6	9.0
Gambia	8.00	64	34.0	13.4
Georgia	2.00	94	61.0	41.6
Germany	1.00	99	66.9	52.5
Ghana	7.00	71	28.0	4.8
Greece	2.00	92	61.0	38.0
Guinea-Bissau	7.67	(67)	30.0	12.0
Guinea	7.33	67	30.0	9.5

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Hong Kong	2.00	107	55.4	22.0
Hungary	1.00	97	66.0	47.5
Iceland	1.00	101	68.0	64.1
India	6.33	82	49.0	22.0
Indonesia	4.67	87	50.0	6.1
Iran	3.00	84	55.0	35.6
Iraq	3.33	87	60.5	33.3
Ireland	1.00	92	64.9	53.3
Italy	1.67	97	64.0	46.7
Japan	2.00	105	55.7	35.7
Jordan	3.00	85	51.7	31.9
Kazakhstan	2.00	(94)	58.0	43.3
Kenya	6.67	72	32.4	1.2
Korea, North	2.00	(106)	58.0	39.0
Korea, South	2.00	(106)	58.0	37.5
Kuwait	4.00	87	57.0	24.0
Kyrgyzstan	2.00	(90)	58.0	43.9
Laos	4.33	89	55.0	15.0

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Latvia	1.00	(98)	68.0	57.0
Lebanon	3.67	82	58.2	33.9
Lesotho	7.00	(67)	36.0	29.5
Liberia	7.00	(67)	29.4	6.4
Libya	4.33	83	52.0	36.5
Lithuania	1.33	91	67.0	54.6
Luxembourg	1.00	100	67.0	49.8
Macedonia	1.67	91	63.0	42.0
Malawi	7.00	60	27.0	14.0
Malaysia	4.67	92	55.0	3.3
Mali	6.00	68	34.1	20.0
Mauritania	5.00	76	44.0	20.6
Moldova	2.00	96	65.0	47.0
Mongolia	2.00	100	59.0	47.4
Morocco	2.67	84	54.8	33.4
Mozambique	7.00	64	19.5	26.4
Namibia	6.67	72	26.0	23.0
Nepal	4.33	78	51.1	21.7

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Netherlands	1.00	100	67.4	52.3
Niger	7.00	69	30.0	13.1
Nigeria	7.00	69	27.6	6.3
Norway	1.00	100	68.0	59.9
Oman	5.00	85	52.0	26.0
Pakistan	3.67	84	52.3	25.0
Philippines	4.00	86	54.1	15.2
Poland	1.00	95	67.0	52.3
Portugal	2.00	95	64.5	38.5
Qatar	4.00	78	55.0	25.2
Romania	2.00	91	65.0	44.5
Russia	2.00	97	65.0	55.8
Rwanda	7.00	76	29.5	2.8
Saudi Arabia	4.00	80	52.5	24.8
Senegal	7.67	71	34.0	13.0
Sierra Leone	7.00	64	30.0	7.5
Slovakia	1.33	96	67.0	48.2
Slovenia	1.00	96	65.0	46.1

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Somalia	7.00	68	35.0	2.2
South Africa	6.67	72	41.2	26.0
Spain	2.00	98	64.7	40.4
Sri Lanka	6.00	79	45.0	6.8
Sudan	6.67	77	35.5	15.5
Swaziland	7.00	(68)	35.6	27.7
Sweden	1.00	(99)	68.0	59.3
Switzerland	1.00	101	66.0	46.9
Syria	3.33	79	52.8	33.5
Taiwan	3.00	105	58.0	25.0
Tajikistan	2.67	(87)	58.0	38.5
Tanzania	7.00	72	27.4	7.0
Thailand	3.67	91	55.0	13.7
Togo	7.00	70	28.0	6.1
Tunisia	3.00	84	56.3	36.9
Turkey	2.00	90	59.2	41.4
Turkmenistan	2.33	(87)	58.0	38.0
Uganda	7.67	73	32.0	0.3

Country	Skin Color	IQ	Skin Reflectance (in % Reflected)	Latitude (degrees from equator)
Ukraine	1.67	93	65.0	50.3
United Arab Emirates	4.00	83	55.0	24.9
United Kingdom	1.00	100	64.7	51.5
Uzbekistan	2.00	(87)	58.0	41.8
Vietnam	4.00	94	55.9	10.8
Yemen	6.00	83	48.0	15.4
Zambia	7.67	71	27.0	15.8
Zimbabwe	7.00	72	24.0	17.8

Table 2 Means and standard deviations for climate-related variables and 2006 IQ for “Old World” countries.

Variables	M	SD
Skin color (1 = lightest, 8 = darkest)	3.99	2.38
Skin reflectance: % light reflected	49.95	14.89
Winter high in degrees Celsius	15.75	12.78
Winter low in degrees Celsius	6.60	11.25
Summer high in degrees Celsius	29.20	5.20
Summer low in degrees Celsius	19.46	5.00
Latitude in degrees from equator	28.67	17.60
L & V 2006 IQ	84.22	12.98
L & V 2006 IQ without Africa	91.74	7.97

Table 3 Intercorrelations of climate-related variables across 127 “Old World” countries.

Variables	Skin color	Skin reflectance	Winter high	Winter low	Summer high	Summer low
Skin reflectance	-.96**					
Winter high	.84**	-.78**				
Winter low	.75**	-.68**	.96**			
Summer high	.30**	-.23*	.45**	.42**		
Summer low	.46**	-.36**	.67**	.70**	.80**	
Latitude	.88**	.84**	-.91**	-.87**	-.41**	-.62**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 4 Correlations of climate-related variables with IQ across “Old World” countries

Climate-Related Variables	IQ	IQ excluding Africa
Skin color	-.91**	-.75**
Skin reflectance	.91**	.73**
Winter high	-.76**	-.57**
Winter low	-.67**	-.50**
Summer high	-.30**	-.57**
Summer low	-.39**	-.52**
Latitude	.78**	.56**

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$

Table 5 Correlation matrix of all variables. Correlations on the right side of the diagonal are for countries with measured skin reflectance (N = 39), and correlations on the left side of the diagonal are for countries with extrapolated skin reflectance (N = 90).

Variables	IQ	Skin color	Skin reflectance	Winter high	Winter low	Summer high	Summer low	Latitude
IQ	1	-.81	.74	-.71	-.51	-.51	-.29	.64
Skin color	-.84	1	-.96	.85	.25	.30	.46	-.88
Skin reflectance	.87	-.96	1	-.78	-.69	-.72	-.36	.84
Winter high	-.71	.85	-.78	1	.96	.45	.68	-.91
Winter low	-.64	.75	-.68	.96	1	.42	.70	-.89
Summer high	-.38	.30	-.23	.45	.42	1	.80	-.40
Summer low	-.47	.46	-.36	.68	.70	.86	1	-.62
Latitude	.72	.84	.84	-.91	-.87	-.41	-.62	1

Table 6 Skin color of native populations in the Pacific and New World, their measured IQs, and IQs predicted from the IQs of “Old World” populations with the same skin color.

Region/population	Skin Color	Measured IQs	Predicted IQs
Arctic people	2	91	96
Australia	7	62	69
Canada	2	90	96
Colombia	4	84	85
Cook Islands	1	89	99
Ecuador	5	88	83
Fiji Islands	6	84	72
Guatemala	3	79	87
Hawaii	2	85	96
Mariana Islands	4	81	85
Marshall Islands	3	83	87
Mexico	5	87	82

New Caledonia	6	85	72
New Guinea	6	63	72
New Zealand	3	90	87
Peru	5	86	83
Tonga	1	86	99
United States	3	86	87

Note: It appears that the raters made an error when they assigned skin color of 1 to Tonga. If 1 is changed to 2, the correlation between skin color and measured IQ changes from -.60 to -.61, the correlation between skin color and predicted IQs remains -.97, and the correlation between measured and predicted IQ goes from .64 to .65. The bottom line is that is that the global inferences are not changed.