

Review of: "Exploring Historical and Contemporary Academic Disparities: A Comparative Study of Black and Non-Black Nova Scotians"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The manuscript proposes evaluating the academic performance of individuals of Black and Non-Black ethnicities within a district of Canada, specifically Nova Scotia. This evaluation utilizes historical data and math/reading tests, each contributing to different scoring systems outlined in the manuscript. The findings are substantiated by additional studies referenced in the literature. While it is undeniable that academic disparities exist, the presentation of these findings can greatly impact how they are perceived, whether in a positive or negative light. In my opinion, certain passages within the manuscript may come across as negative or even offensive. For instance, the language used in the first paragraph of page 11 could be perceived as such.

"These outcomes align with the "inherited disadvantage" model proposed by Fuerst & Shibaev (2023), which posits that inequalities are largely transmitted vertically through cultural or genetic vectors. According to this model, an individual with a lower proportion of great-grandparents from a historically disadvantaged group (e.g., 1/8) would tend to perform better

It is important to highlight that these analyses are purely numerical and may not fully capture individual talents.

Unfortunately, individuals in unequal positions may need to exert greater effort compared to others, although numerous examples illustrate this possibility. If the authors were to adjust certain sentences, the message could potentially be conveyed in a more optimistic manner.

Additionally, the paragraph on page 10 lacks scientific evidence.

"The second reason the academic gaps may be underestimated in the context of historic Afro-descent communities in Nova Scotia is the high rate of exogamy (marriage outside one's social group) among third-generation and beyond Black Canadians. This has likely resulted in a highly admixed Afro-descent identifying community, as suggested by visual evidence from sources such as student photographs in news reports covering events such as Black Excellence Day (e.g., Field, 2022)"

Drawing conclusions based solely on photographs of a subset of individuals attending an event may not accurately reflect

genetic ancestry. Phenotypes alone cannot definitively indicate genetic makeup, as an individual may possess mtDNA or Y-chromosomes associated with a particular ancestral group without displaying corresponding physical traits. I believe expressions of this nature are not conducive to constructive dialogue. Furthermore, what is the intention behind such statements? How can cognitive ability differences be attributed solely to genetic ancestry without considering economic, cultural, and developmental factors? Without considering the ethical implications of the hypothesis...

Finally, I contend that the underlying reasons for observed academic performance disparities are more likely rooted in social, political, and economic factors rather than genetics.

Perhaps a discussion focusing on why the academic performance results of that particular group of people fall below the national average could provide a constructive framework for explaining the obtained results.